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UNDER MARX'S BANNER

A COLLECTION OF ARTICLES

BY

Hiren Mukerjee

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PREFACE

I do not know if it will be considered presumption on my part to present in book-form a selection of my articles contributed to various periodicals between 1935 and 1943. Perhaps, however, I shall be permitted to plead that the publication was actually suggested by friends whom I have good reasons to consider capable and discerning in their judgment.

To each article in this collection is appended the date of its first publication. There is quite a number which deal with significant aspects of the changing international scene in recent years. Whenever, therefore, my conclusions seem to require some modification in view of later developments, I shall beg of the reader to remember that our understanding of present international alignments and our anticipation of the way the world is likely to be going in the future require, most urgently, a retrospective survey.

I would like to put in an illustration to make my point clearer. One of the articles written during the dark Munich days of 1938 emphasises that Britain was playing the part of the leader of international reaction and was willingly paying Danegeld to fascism and whetting its murderous appetite in the process, because of an insensate dislike and dread of the U. S. S. R. Today, surely, it will be wrong to think of Britain playing the same role still, for inspite of a considerable section of her ruling class, she is now in the camp of progress which the Soviets lead, and is fighting, in alliance with the Soviets, for the annihilation of fascism in Europe. It is important, however, to remember the historical background of this great change in British foreign policy, for otherwise we should be running the risk of being unable to anticipate and defeat the probable machinations of reactionaries who will fight till the last ditch for their ill-gotten prerogatives.

A glance at the table of contents will show that there are a number of articles which deal with topics which have a good deal more than merely contemporary interest. I have tried to discuss such concepts as liberty, community and nationalism, eschewing flights of theoretic fancy and relating these concepts to the realities of our life. I have given my view of religion as a great and vital force which has been used through the ages as the cement of a class society and a soporific for the people. I have attempted to explain what appears to my way of thinking to be fundamental in literary criticism. I have selected out of our nineteenth century history a very bright and hopeful page—the record of the Indigo disturbances. And I have included a number of studies on various aspects of the brave, new civilisation which the Soviets have built.

The articles, I am confident, are not disconnected, for there runs through them all a red thread of unity, a unity which, I hope, reflects whatever understanding I have been able to muster of the essentials of Marxist theory. It is this confidence which has persuaded me to select for this volume the title it has the honour to bear.

The publication of this book, which was planned last year, had been held up for unavoidable reasons. I have to thank my friends, Girin Chakravarti and Ajoy Bhose, for the hard work they have put in to bring it out. I am beholden to Ashu Bandyopadhyaya, a rising artist, who has designed the frontispiece of this book. I would like also to add a word of gratitude to my wife who will, I hope, accept this volume as an apology for hours of pre-occupation.

CALCUTTA, }
August 23, 1944. }

HIREN MUKERJEE

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THE ILLUSION OF LIBERTY

(From "*Twentieth Century*" Allahabad, July, 1935.)

Planning, in one form or another, is almost unanimously suggested today as the only rational remedy for our economic ills. This is no surprise, since we live in a world where wheat is allowed to rot, and the boll-weevil is accounted a blessing in cotton-districts, and money and ingenuity is wasted in finding ways of turning coffee into fuel, while cotton mills work short-time and millions continue to starve. As most of us have no faith in the magic emergence of order out of this chaos, economic planning seems to be the only way out. Liberal publicists like Mr. Ramsay Muir, however, continue to harp upon the necessity of maintaining intact the liberty that is bound to be entrenched upon, if planning is to have a chance. They forget that liberty has often, in history,

been the rallying cry of a selfish interest intent upon retaining privilege for itself. A similar mistake has been committed by most socialist leaders in western Europe, and particularly in England, who as good parliamentarians, have been hard put to it to reconcile their socialism with the task of running a capitalist democracy. In a luminous lecture in London sometime ago, M. Elie Halévy, the eminent French historian, pointed out the paralysis and inefficiency of socialist parties in the West, and showed how the mid-nineteenth century socialist revolution in France was followed by Louis Napoleon, how Mussolini rose on the crest of what was something like a socialist revolution in post-War Italy, how Social Democrats practically ruled Germany for ten years, only, as it were, to prepare the ground for Hitler, how the high hopes raised in England during 1918-22 were dashed by the acumen of Lloyd George, and the apparent triumph of Labour in 1929 was succeeded by the "National" Government of 1931. Social Democratic parties have had, it seems, to run what Bernard Shaw once called organisations of anarchy flying the flag of liberty. Socialist parliamentarians appear to be eager to protect the individual against the state, a laudable task no doubt; but they are apt to forget that their more insistent duty is to make the state strong against the capitalists. Such being the case, M. Halévy concludes, there is an inner contradiction running through modern socialism, and between Liberty and Organisation, it falls to the ground.¹

But is there, necessarily, an antinomy between Liberty

¹ 'Socialism and the Problem of Democratic Parliamentarianism,' in *Journal of International Affairs*, July, 1934.

and Organisation ? It would be flagrantly unhistorical to say that since the antithesis between liberty and authority was appropriate to the issues raised by the liberal revolutions of the nineteenth century, it must always remain so. An absolute right to do what one pleases, never is or should be inherent in a person ; fortunately or unfortunately, we cannot all be living together in Crusoe's island. It is no denial of freedom of speech, for instance, when one is prohibited from shouting "Fire" in a crowded theatre. Liberty, that is, must come to terms with authority, and the terms are necessarily relative, always changing with the conditions of time and place. The growth of state interference in the nineteenth century was the product of experience ; so has been the development of the social services under the auspices of the twentieth century State. With the change in the scale of society, the older insistence on the unfettered claims of individuality no longer holds good. We pass as Professor Laski has put it, from contract to relation, as we have passed from status to contract.

There are few things more dangerous than the habit of speaking of liberty in general terms. It does not really exist ; it serves too often, when illegitimately invoked, as an instrument of obscurantism. The working man does not sacrifice his birth-right when he sees a panel doctor instead of none at all, or when his children have their teeth examined and are provided with a meal at school by what Mr. Belloc chooses to call the "Servile State." There is even today a disproportionate preoccupation with the problems of liberty, while the emphasis should be shifted to that of security, of well-being. When liberty is pitted against socially necessary legislation, it is banal ; it is no

more than a plea for the unhindered pursuit of property and profit. The wage-earner in a free, capitalist democracy today may well exclaim, with no less justice than did Madame Roland, "O Liberty ! what crimes are committed in thy name !"

Modern writers are often at pains to point out that liberty is no negative conception, that it is very much more than a mere absence of restraint, and aims at an equitable organisation, of opportunities. But our inequalitarian society presents insuperable obstacles to any such efforts. Aristotle saw many centuries ago, that till the passion for equality was satisfied, liberty was unattainable. This passion is by no means just a selfish jealousy, the fruit, as was sardonically said of democracy, of a dubious marriage between Envy and Rousseau. The facts of life are far too grim for facetious epigrammatising. What Mr. Tawney has called the sickness of an acquisitive society is too virulent to escape notice.

If a list was drawn up of 'the fifteen richest men in the world today, there would probably be half a dozen Indian names in it. At the other end of the scale, we meet with the estimate of Major General Sir John Megaw, Director of the Indian Medical Service, that only 39 per cent of our population can be considered well-nourished, while 41 per cent are poorly nourished and 20 per cent very badly nourished."² So about 210 millions are "very badly nourished," which means on the starvation line. In England, where more is spent on social services than in any other capitalist country,

² Report in "*Manchester Guardian*", quoted by Ralph Fox in his „British Colonial Imperialism," (1934). appendix.

over two million workers have no work and little hope, and even if they receive the full unemployment benefit, they are below the poverty line. Some 12 million workers toil for an average income of 45 shillings a week, while a hundred thousand persons, many of whom have never done a day's work that is socially useful, have incomes of over £40 a week. The heiress of Sir David Yule, the Calcutta merchant, has an annual income in the neighbourhood of a million pounds. Sir Hugo Hirst, head of the General Electric Company, the tobacco magnates, Sir H. Cunliffe-Owen and Sir Louis Baron, and the coal magnate Viscount Borodale pay more than £1,000 a week as income-tax.³ Sir Josiah Stamp calculated that in 1919, about two-thirds of the nation's aggregate wealth was held by just under 4,00,000 persons or less than one per cent of the population, and one-third of it by as few as 36,000, or less than 1 per 1,000. Professor Bowley estimated that in 1911, some 250 millions, a sum almost equivalent to the whole pre-War budget of Great Britain, were spent on luxuries by the rich and the moderately well-to-do.⁴ Mr. Samuel Courtauld, a great and public-spirited employer, reckoned in 1930 that roughly 180 million pounds were spent every year on advertising, four-fifths of which were uneconomic and a sheer waste.⁵ England spends some one hundred and fifty million pounds on drinks alone, while an enormous amount is wasted on deer forests,

3 A. Hutt: 'Condition of the Working Class in Great Britain,' (1934) ; Colin Clark, in "The National Income, 1924-31" (1932) computes (pp. 77-78) that an equal distribution of the present national income would give £5 a week to every family, including the unemployed.

4 "Division of the Product of Industry," (1919), p. 49.

5 *Week-End Review*, July, 1930.

grouse moors, salmon rivers, fox-hunting, villas in the south of France and yachts in the Mediterranean. On the other hand, there is an estimate by a reputed doctor that the annual cost to the nation of preventable sickness is a hundred million pounds." When Disraeli spoke of the "two nations" in England, between whom there was no sympathy and who lived in different worlds of their own, he was not essaying a flight of the imagination, but was telling a bare, cruel fact, true in England as everywhere else. Freedom is a grand word, but for the masses it is but sounding brass and tinkling cymbal. Death is supposed to be the leveller, but the "two nations" are disparate, not alone in life, but also in death.

"In spite of the poets," writes Professor Tawney, the hidden fire of his righteous indignation breaking the bonds of his usual restraint,⁷ "there are no such inveterate respecters of persons as disease and death, and the disparities find expression, for example, in the fact that in the less densely populated part of Manchester the death-rate is 10·5 per 1,000, and in the more densely populated parts 16, and that in a poor district of Glasgow it is approximately twice what it is where poverty is less. The poor, it seems, are beloved by the gods, if not by their fellow-mortals."

Against this background of inequality, the liberty of capitalist democracy is found to be essentially an aristocratic concept: it is good no doubt but meant for exclusive consumption by those who can afford it. Property, as Harrington told us in the seventeenth century,

6 R. H. Tawney · "Equality" (1930), pp. 216-17, 220.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 91.

means power, and in the ultimate analysis, liberty is a function of power. Many of our cherished freedoms are little more than formal to most of us ; they are available only to those who have incomes large enough to be in a position to enjoy them. Employers have often invoked the freedom of contract to check what they choose to call the "tyranny" of the Trade Unions, forgetting that individual workers are impossibly handicapped in bargaining power without the help of their own organisations. Freedom of movement, to the very poor—and most of us are in that unfortunate condition,—is a luxury beyond their ken. It is no doubt a valuable privilege to have freedom of speech and writing ; but the differential treatment meted out to those who do not hold what may be called "respectable" political or religious views, the unscrupulousness of the millionaire press, the power of money to talk and stop others talking, considerably modify the value of the right. A great deal used once to be made of freedom of trade which ranked high among the primary liberties ; faint echoes of it still come from secluded liberal platforms. To most people, however, it will appear an anarchic idea that would prevent the advent of an ordered co-operative economic life. So far as recent history is concerned, at any rate, freedom of trade is being relegated to the museum of antiquities ; it is being daily crushed under factory legislation and tariffs and marketing schemes and Industrial Recovery Acts.

With his characteristic bluntness, Lenin called liberty "a bourgeois illusion." Without a doubt, he never denied the splendour of freedom ; in its cause, he and his comrades made sacrifices to which the last hundred years of history furnish no comparable parallel. But to him,

the road to freedom meant the creation of conditions that are anathema to capitalist society. Where society is based on unequal wealth, when coercion is implicit in poverty and unemployment, talk of equal rights is a mockery. We are all, in popular parlance, "free to dine at the Ritz and own a Rolls Royce." We are all equal before the law; "with majestic impartiality, the law," as Anatole France has bidden us remember, "forbids rich and poor alike, to steal bread and to sleep under bridges." Such is the liberty that the majority of mankind is besought to cherish. It does not exist, save in the narrow legal sense. That it exists in any full sense of the word is "a bourgeois illusion."

Universal suffrage, or a near approach to it, used to be the liberal panacea for all political ills, the guarantor of liberty. Experience has taught us how it is, in present circumstances, a delusion, that it is, as Engels said, no more than a sign of the maturity of the working classes. There is, besides, the case of the American negro who is entitled to the franchise on the condition, in the south, that he does not vote, just as he has the right to use the railways as a public carrier, but only on the condition that he does not demand all their amenities. All over the world, property controls propaganda that plays such a large part in elections. For one thing, there is the organised expenditure of parties; but this is trifling when compared to the influence, in England, of the daily and Sunday press, which is today a department of Big Business. The Comité des Forges in France, similarly buy up the "Temps" and the "Journal des Débats," and control their policy. Newspapers are conducted not only for profit, but also to promote the views of the press-lords. The reader is as a rule unaware that news is selected and edited

in conformity to such views, that it is often expanded or "written up," that headlines are not as simple as they look and may not correspond exactly to the text. Even the most reputable papers have their marked prejudices ; the London "Times" resolutely refused to have a correspondent at Moscow, and its Riga correspondent tells things about the wicked Bolshevik that may not always agree with the facts. In August 1920, the "New Republic," a paper notably free from what is known as "100 per cent Americanism" published an analysis, by Walter Lippmann and Charles Merz, two of America's leading publicists, of the distortion of Russian news by the New York Times. "Our governors," writes Professor Laski, "may well adapt to themselves the aphorism of Fletcher of Saltoun and say that they care not who has the making of the nation's laws so long as they have the making of its news." The press must pander to property, or its chances are slight. Poverty prevents it from engaging the best talent for its staff : advertisements are all-important, but they tend to appear in papers that are reckoned "safe." Mr. Brailsford tells us⁸ how one of his editorials cost a paper £1,000 in advertisement revenue on the first day and much more afterwards. It is well-known that in free England, the association of distributors refuses to handle the communist "Daily Worker." No wonder that in his thesis submitted to the first Congress of the Communist International, Lenin used these caustic words :

'The capitalists have always understood liberty to mean liberty for the rich to make profits, and liberty for the workers to die of starvation ; by 'liberty of

8 "Property or Peace" (1934) p. 82

the press' they mean liberty for the rich to bribe the press and to fabricate and inspire so-called opinion."

That the so-called freedom of speech and writing is largely illusory is proved by the recent case of Professor Laski, who found himself in a predicament because he had told a Russian audience what he thought, as a student, of the English constitution. The Member of Parliament for London University went to the length of proposing to apply economic pressure to get rid of a distinguished academician, whose views were distasteful to the propertied class.⁹ In November, 1934, Professor J. B. S. Haldane, the eminent biologist, was invited by the British Broadcasting Corporation to speak on the causes of war, but he was refused the use of the microphone when it came out that the text of his speech did not correspond to what the governing classes wanted him to say. We hold, thus, our liberties on a most precarious tenure; to use them effectively, it appears, is to forfeit them.

Freedom of opinion can be little more than a sham, so long as people even in free England who express such views as Laski's are debarred by an invisible censorship from most types of public employment and get little of a fair chance even in the professions. Property controls careers, and those who dare challenge its rights must risk the price of heresy. What the Japanese government quaintly termed "dangerous thoughts," really involve danger to the occupation of thousands of clerks in every country. The Trade Union movement accords some protection in this regard to the manual workers, but they

⁹ See correspondence in the *New Statesman and Nation*, August, 1934, and a leader on the topic, August 18.

have not yet as sure a shield as they would like. There are certain areas, mainly agricultural, in England, which is probably the most advanced of capitalist democracies, where even the secrecy of the ballot does not ensure a free vote. Mr Brailsford gives us instances of the use of pressure at election-time, which establishes through the mechanism of parliament something like a dictatorship of property.¹⁰

If liberty is to be real, the civil services, central or local, the judiciary and the magistracy, must be adequately staffed by the sons and daughters of the people. They are not so today. Most of us live in subordination because of poverty or ignorance; we have no access to the light, and a tree perpetually in the shade perishes without fruit. Even in England, the organisation of education leaves much to be desired. Of the pupils leaving grant-aided secondary schools, only 4 per cent go on to the University and of elementary school children only 4 out of every 1000. "The educational ladder is an ideal rather than a fact,"¹¹ most of us go through life in complete ignorance of the heritage of civilisation, and have no opportunity of bringing our experience to bear upon the tasks of society. To all intents and purposes, such professions as the Bar and Medicine, the officer class of the armed forces of the Crown, or even the ministry of the Church of England, are barred to working class children. It is very much easier for an aristocrat in England to enter a political career than it

¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, pp. 87-88.

¹¹ Carr-Saunders and Caradog Jones: "Social Structure of England and Wales," p. 127, quoted by A. L. Rowse in "Politics and the Younger Generation," (1931).

is for a man of the people. Laski's analysis shows that out of 69 ministers during 1885-1904, 40 were sons of nobility, 52 educated at Oxford or Cambridge, and 46 at public schools. Even in 1906-16, out of 51, 25 were sons of nobility. The Foreign Office and the Diplomatic services have been a preserve for the sons of the aristocratic, rentier and professional classes.¹² Even in commerce, the pivotal positions are held largely by aristocrats. A glance at the list of directors of British banks or insurance companies or railways will prove the value of a titled name on a prospectus. This is the state of affairs which produces what Mr. Tawney has called the "religion of inequality," and defenders of capitalist democracy are driven to disregard the salutary warning of Mathew Arnold, uttered years ago, that "our inequality materialises our upper class, vulgarises our middle class, brutalises our lower."

The rule of law has often been trumpeted as the guarantee of freedom, and the judiciary in several countries can point with pride to an impressive tradition of independence and incorruptibility. But while the personal integrity of the judge is not unoften unimpeachable, his "inarticulate major premise," as Mr. Justice Holmes has put it, is acquiescence in the capitalist system and antagonism to all attacks on it. The storm of protest at the nomination of Mr. Justice Brandeis to the Supreme Court of the U. S. A. in 1916 is highly significant; the judge's only fault was that, as a barrister, he had been a supporter of the legal limitation of hours of labour. It

12 Figures in Tawney's "*Equality*" and Laski's "*Studies in Law and Politics*."

is common knowledge that the various appeals of Mooney and Billings were rejected by the Supreme Court of California, to the shame of American justice. Judge Thayer an eminent jurist whom one hesitates to accuse of partiality forgot his duty and responsibility in the notorious case of Sacco and Vanzetti. The scandals of the recent Scottsborough case, with its additional complexity of the colour question, show how the working of justice are often informed by the dominant prejudices of the time. Equally illuminating is the attitude of the U. S. A. Supreme Court to such legislation as that for a minimum wage or the abolition of child labour. On an abstract theory of the liberty of contract, the court in *Coppage v. Kansas* (1915) refused to prohibit the dismissal of workmen joining a trade union. Frankfurter and Green in their book "*The Labour Injunction*" (1930) have shown how the attitude of the courts towards injunctions is another clear indication of their class character.

The British judicial system is different, and comparatively free from such blemishes. But the judge is a member of the governing class and rarely forgets it. The interpretation of trade union law in the *Osborne* case (1910), the attitude of the Court of Appeal towards the construction of Workmen's Compensation Acts, the definition of "public policy" which seems to differ for different industrial classes, as the famous *Moghul Case* (1892) makes one suspect, all go to show how for all his honesty, the judge is faithful, without being conscious of any such fact, to the interest of the class to which he belongs.¹³

13 For the last two paragraphs, I am greatly indebted to H. J. Laski's "*Democracy in Crisis*." (1933).

The English law against sedition and seditious conspiracy, especially in view of recent legislation, is a formidable weapon, capable even of rendering normal political controversy and pacifist propaganda impossible. Countless men and women have suffered imprisonment and worse for having espoused opinions that threaten the stability of the existing order. But the murder of two of the best-loved leaders of international socialism, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, when they were under arrest by a semi-socialist German government in 1918, led to nothing more than a trial where the alleged murderers were acquitted. England will severely punish any one who hands a seditious or pacifist leaflet to a soldier; but Carson, when he embarked on constructive treason in Ireland and was overwhelmingly successful, was not prosecuted.

There is much force in the criticism that there is one law for the rich and another for the poor. A rich man can easily secure bail; a poor man cannot. Fine means a lot to the poor, perhaps, imprisonment; to the rich, it is less than a flea-bite. There is a world of difference between the treatment meted out to a rich bankrupt and a poor debtor. There are ways and means of avoiding the full payment of income tax—living abroad for part of the year, for instance. But workers saddled with arrears of rates get little mercy. The rich man commands all the resources of legal technique; the arrangements for the defence of poor prisoners are utterly inadequate. There is, besides a differentiation in treatment.

What we call embezzlement in a junior clerk becomes high finance in a millionaire. What is disorderly conduct in the East End of London becomes high

spirits west of Temple Bar. What is theft in Poplar is kleptomania in Kensington. We have no conscience about the fate of Sacco and Vanzetti ; but Mr. Thaw's millions enable him to escape their fate.¹⁴

Our soulless economic system that cares not for social justice is responsible for the nugatory nature of the liberties we should like so much to prize. But what is this freedom to the man without a job on the bread-line and the unemployment queue ?

If a man [writes Professor Tawney] eats bread made of flour produced to the extent of 40 per cent by two milling combines and meat supplied by an international meat trust, and lives in a house built of materials of which 25 per cent are controlled by a ring, and buys his tobacco from one amalgamation and his matches from another, while his wife's sewing-thread is provided by a third, which has added eight millionaires to the national roll of honour in the last twenty years, is he free as a consumer ? Is he free as a worker, if he is liable to have his piece-rates cut at the discretion of his employer and on expressing his annoyance, to be dismissed as an agitator and to be thrown on the scrap-heap without warning ?¹⁵

Not many months ago, there was a calamitous explosion at a coal-mine in Gresford, England. Mining science has long known how to render pit explosions comparatively harmless. This knowledge is not applied because safety is sacrificed to coal-getting, because profits come before

¹⁴ Laski : 'A Plea for Equality' in 'Dangers of Obedience' (1930) : Solicitor : 'English Justice,' (1929) . A Hutt : *op. cit.*

¹⁵ *Op. cit.* , p. 253.

lives.¹⁶ In the "New Statesman and Nation" of November 10, 1934, a Doctor wrote on fatigue in the mine. His patient was a fireman who had worked for 23 years with one week's holiday every year, whose job was to walk underground for some ten miles every day and whose responsibility was the direct safety of some 70 or 80 men and boys on his beat and the indirect safety of everyone working underground. His title should really be, "safety man," if he is tired, as our doctor's patient was, he is infinitely more dangerous down the mine than a dozen box of matches. But the law upholds the liberty of contract and does not insist that men with responsible jobs in a mine should have, say, one week's holiday with pay every three months. The men are afraid of losing their jobs and will not ask for frequent holidays, and so the miserable old system goes on and the lives and limbs of thousands of workers are in constant jeopardy.

A tale of unpretentious bravery, of hardships endured with the utmost good humour, could be told of the men who do the world's work for hardly a reward. It is strange how the world's conscience is not properly roused, and the fight against industrial accidents and disease is not taken up in right earnest. Scientists admit that 65 per cent to 98 per cent of all industrial accidents can be prevented, but little is done to avail of their services. To give but one instance among many, there is what has been called the tragedy of the hat shops. "Hatter's shakes" is no respecter of age ; it attacks young and old alike, their trembling hands incapacitate them for work, some being

16. See details of the Gresford enquiry in "Essential News" (London Weekly) November 3, 1934.

unable even to feed themselves. It is due to the use of strong solutions of mercury, to bad working conditions and absence of ventilation and proper washing apparatus. In 1902, a Russian scientist, Levitsky, discovered a harmless substitute for mercury. The Soviet government in 1934 made the use of this method compulsory, but no other government has yet thought fit to follow suit.¹⁷

These are a few of the cases which prove the coercive relationship of employer to employed. The promulgation of fundamental civic rights does by no means insure liberty for the citizens. A man who is driven to work under dehumanising conditions cannot be expected to be particularly 'enthusiastic about Magna Charta and Habeas Corpus.

The fatal defect of capitalist democracy lies in the fact that while it proclaims equal liberties of behaviour and conscience for all men, its economic system knows nothing better than the ethics of the jungle. Its right hand does not indeed know what its left hand doeth. Thus a blight falls even on our vaunted cultural freedom, in the final analysis, poverty kills creativity. A list of the great poetical names of the last hundred years or so, as drawn up by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, shows it unmistakably. Coleridge, Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, Landor, Keats, Tennyson, Browning, Arnold, Morris, Rossetti, Swinburne—all but three of these were University men, and alone among them, Keats was not fairly well-to-do.

It is certain [says Sir Arthur] that, by some fault in our commonwealth, the poor poet has not in these

17. On this topic, *see* Grace Burnham's "Dangerous Jobs" (International Publishers, New York, 1932)

days a dog's chance. We may prate of democracy, but actually a poor child in England has little more hope than had the son of an Athenian slave to be emancipated into that intellectual freedom of which great writings are born.¹⁸

There are people who tell us that there is no reason to suspect the existence of a hoard of buried talent, that the mute inglorious Milton is a myth. But they conveniently forget that probably the two greatest creative writers of modern England—Hardy and Lawrence—came from the people and their world of experience was much the richer on that account. One could perhaps also include Wells in this category, for his experience and his best work have alike come nearer to the world of common men.¹⁹ When one speaks of cultural freedom and its supposed immunity from the banal effects of the sordidness of our economic system, it is salutary to remember the compulsory deprivation imposed on most of us, which prevents the flowering of a real culture. It is no surprise that popular art to-day is popular in the sense that it is made for the people but not by them, and this is, as Mr Aldous Huxley says somewhere, the modern tragedy.

The handicaps of unequal wealth must go before we can pretend to be free. It is easy to wax lyrical over Croce's beautiful vagueness when he says that "freedom alone gives meaning to life ; without it, life is unbearable." There is an insidious magic in the grandeur of his words. "There are those who question the future of the ideal

18 Quoted by R. D. Charques, "Contemporary Literature and Social Revolution," (Secker, ed.).

19 I owe this point to Rowse, *op. cit.*, p, 183 n.

of liberty. To them we answer that it has more than a future, it has eternity."²⁰ But when he goes on to say that this freedom abides in the minds of many noble men, "in the constitution of many important countries and in institutions and customs," the spell is broken. We are brought back to the hard facts of existence and to Lenin's insistent question :

As long as classes continue to exist, one must in any discourse on freedom and equality ask : freedom for which class ? and for exactly what use ? equality of which class with which ? and what exactly is to be the relation of the one class to the other ?

The fundamental problem of human existence is not just freedom, but the purposes which it can serve. "Freedom," said Mathew Arnold, "is, like Industry, a very good horse to ride, but to ride somewhere." The goal can only be to make human life rational and happy. The existing forms of freedom do not lead us nearer that goal, for they lack, of necessity, so sadly in substance. Society must be classless if it is to be free ; and in the social revolution that must come if the beauty of life is to endure, we should reverse the slogans of the French Revolution : "Fraternité, Egalité, Liberté !"

20 'On Liberty,' *Foreign Affairs* October, 1932 ; see the chapter on 'The Religion of Liberty' in Croce's "History of Europe in the 19th Century" (1934).

THE MYTH OF COMMUNITY

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“I think that the poorest he that is in England hath a life to live as the richest he,” argued Col. Rainboro’ at a famous meeting of the Council of Officers in 1647 and he was answered by Ireton, Cromwell’s son-in-law, with the remark that it was only the men of property with their stake in the country who should have the passport to power. This argument, decided at the time in favour of the inegalitarian Ireton, raised a fundamental problem, not entirely settled yet, the problem of the basis of community. Is it possible to speak of a society where the few order the destinies of the many, as a community? Can community flourish where the principle of private profit is sacrosanct, where property has irresponsible power over the masses? How is one to explain the many

distempers of society, if the sense of community is genuinely widespread ? We discover, in short, that there is a continual conflict between the claims of property and the claims of civilisation, of peace, of social well-being, and that our present discontents are due, pre-eminently, to that conflict.

Professor MacIver defines community as "the Kin occupying a terrain." The definition is brief, but not inadequate, since it brings out admirably the two essentials of community—physical contiguity and mental kinship. Men are said to form a community when they live together in social relationship, adhere, more or less, to same customs and traditions and are conscious, to the same extent, of common social purposes. They have a sense of belonging together, a kind of "we-sentiment," to use Oppenheimer's expression, a feeling, besides, that each has a role to play and a cause to serve. The emotions of sympathy and self-subordination in human beings demand, as it were, the communal life ; its organisation is a necessity of society. The emphasis, thus, is not so much upon territorial adjacency as on the consciousness of community among its members. The true community is not administrative ; it is psychological. Its borders are thus capable of infinite expansion. We have come to recognise that the process which has extended the community from the family to the village and from the village to the nation, must not, necessarily, stop at that limit, there are the magistral demands of civilisation to consider. The delimitation of the community and the conflict of loyalty that it may imply, serves therefore as the measure of the reality of the particular communal obligation.

A study of the past and present structure of society, however, makes one doubt if ever the concept of community has been, in fact, realised. Slavery that was once universal and has even yet to be entirely stamped out, is a complete barrier to community. We learn from Plato and Thucydides that in classical Greece, every city was two cities at war with each other, a city of the rich and a city of the poor. Caste, notably in India —and the feudal order everywhere approximated to the caste system —has meant an absolute and permanent stratification of the community. The eminent American sociologist, Thorstein Veblen, in his "Theory of the Leisure Class," has shown how a section of society secured by main force its conspicuous exemption from all useful employment ; their descendants to-day are the wealthy parasites who never contribute a day's effort to the world's work, while millions of men and women never know respite from unremitting toil.

The "Salons" must have rocked with laughter when Voltaire said : "We have never claimed to enlighten shoemakers and servant girls ; they are the portion of the apostles." The degradation of the ordinary man was the occasion of mirth ; its cruel secret never understood. Aristocrats, of course, have always felt immeasurably superior to the common herd, but more than that, they have welcomed the degradation of the lowly as a guarantee of their own security. Whatever the explanation of Voltaire's wit, it shows, no doubt, a deficient sense of community. It is no wonder that in the atmosphere of that age, Rousseau, as someone has said, lived perpetually in that mood of Dr. Johnson when he waited in the anteroom of Chesterfield. In nineteenth century England,

it is significant to notice, Ruskin always referred to the people as 'you'; with Carlyle, they were even further away, they were 'They', it was with Morris, who, incidentally, believed in the class struggle, that the people were always 'We.' Only last year, H. G. Wells, in his autobiography, made an astonishing lapse when he wrote: "For the purposes of revolutionary theory the rest of humanity matters only as the texture of mud matters when we design a steam dredger to keep a channel clear." But if a reviewer pertinently asked, the people's name is mud anyway, why bother to dredge it? And for what precisely, when we have thrown out the mud, shall we have cleared the channel? Community, apparently, has a long way still to travel before it is genuinely felt.

The general acquiescence of the poorer classes in a condition of things that by no ethical standard is justifiable, is an amazing phenomenon; but it is not more amazing than the exploitation by the fortunate few of a whole range of emotions in defence of a vicious economic system. If there were none to suffer, how could the feelings of generosity and sympathy with suffering find satisfaction? So probably the argument, if ever frankly formulated, would have run, and the suffering of the many be justified as an essential back-ground for the "nobility" of the few. We find, for instance, the "saintly" Hannah More, admonishing the famine-stricken women of her village, Shipham, to be grateful to "an all-wise and gracious Providence" for "the benefits flowing from the distinction of rank and fortune, which have enabled the high so liberally to assist the low."¹ In something of the same spirit, the Pope,

1 J. L. & Barbara Hammond. *The Town Labourer*. (ed. 1930), p. 229.

speaking in 1930 over the radio, '*Urbi et orbi*,' referred to the rich as "the guardians and distributors of the Almighty's wealth, to whom Jesus Christ himself entrusted the fate of the poor" and advised the poor "to remember the example of our Saviour Jesus Christ, not to disdain his poverty and his promises, not to disdain the accumulations of spiritual wealth so accessible to them in our day, and aiming towards a better life within permissible limits." The Pope certainly was aware of the enormous wealth of the Church and very likely also of the fact that the "poor" have little or no real opportunity to "accumulate spiritual wealth" when they are manacled to an economic system, that is too much of the earth, earthy. Not so very long ago, in our own country, Mahatma Gandhi adjudicating upon an issue between the owners and workers of certain Ahmedabad cotton mills, delivered himself of the astonishing remark that the workers should not grudge their masters their wealth, for their labour was their own capital—a remark that showed not only his abysmal ignorance of burning economic problems, but what is very much more serious, an unforgiveable forgetfulness that a difference in bargaining power weighs the scales far too heavily against the workers. It drives one to despair when banal remarks such as these—the Pope's or the Mahatma's—appear to receive a patient and respectful hearing. The sense of community shall never flourish so long society, with the blessing of its notables, organises inequality, not only of wealth but of opportunity, an inequality which it defends with arguments that are not less mischievous because they are often so unconsciously pathetic.

For us in India, community is little more than an abstraction, a pleasant myth. Is Bengal a community,

where 25% of its appalling infant mortality is due, as Dr. Bentley calculated, to preventible diseases, while the zemindars, as the Simon Commission, certainly not unfriendly to vested interests, reckoned, appropriate three-quarters of the tax paid, while usurers, according to the Whitley Report, not unoften charge 325% interest, while just mills pay enormous dividends and have no compunction in ruthlessly attacking the workers' lowly standard of living ?² What is one to say of Bombay, where investigation by Government officers in 1921-22 revealed that 97% of the working classes lived in one-room tenements with 6 to 9 persons in a room and that 98% of the children of Bombay mill-workers were given opium that they might not disturb their parents toiling for their food.³ In 1920, the more important cotton mills paid an average dividend of 120%, the highest figure being as much as 365% ; some shareholders are reported to have asked for as high a figure as 200%. At the other end of the scale, we get the lurid information that in 1926 the rate of infant mortality in Bombay's one-room tenements was 577 per 1,000 births, as against 254 per 1,000 in tenements with two room and 107 per 1,000 in hospitals. The national movement of 1929-31 increased Ahmedabad's prosperity, while in 1931 the Textile Union reported that 16,000 workers' tenements were unfit for human habitation.⁴ Till

2 Hooghly Jute Mills Ltd. paid on an average, for the period 1918-28, 125% per annum as dividend and it was during that time that the directors decided to force the workers to work longer for less wages : see Joan Beauchamp "British Imperialism in India," (1934) p. 67.

3 "Labour Gazette," September, 1922 . Whitley Report ; Beauchamp, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

4 Cf. Arno Peahse "The Cotton Industry of India (1929) : Beauchamp,

1923, there were no legal restrictions as regards the employment of children in mines, and in 1931 the mines inspector's report recorded the employment underground of 8,458 children under twelve. The modern factory legislation, besides, applies roughly to some one and a half million out of a total of twenty-three million industrial wage-earners. Our community in India has for its background the abominable *bidi* factories on one hand, where children of five, whose parents are in debt to their employers, sleep on germ-laden dust and on the other, the interminable corps of beggars displaying their nauseous scare before pilgrims assembled in sacred places or looking for something that can possibly be eaten from out of the refuse heaped in front of houses where, but the night before, there had been merry wedding feasts.

Those who are interested in the social history of England will find in say, the works of the Hammonds a massive and horrifying indictment of upper-class* greed. The abominations in the mills and mines of early industrialism, repeated now on Indian soil, are a trite, yet significant, theme. The aristocracy was certainly not without its own brand of culture, but the agony of tortured children, who were forced to play the most infamous part in the industrial life of the time, was an undertone, as Bertrand Russell has said, to the elegant conversation of Holland House. In 1818, a number of medical men gave evidence before the House of Lords that nothing was so good for the health of children as 15 hours a day in factories. "One well-known doctor even refused to commit

op cit. pp. 64, 118. The way the mill-jobbers recruit labour from the villages amounts to something like child-slavery.

himself to the statement that a child's health would be injured by standing for twenty-three out of the twenty-four hours."⁵ Attempts to reform abuses by means of labour organisation were punished, to take a typical instance, by the transportation of six Dorchester labourers across the seas in 1834—a most flagrant instance of class tyranny and class prejudice. The new middle class was perfectly ready, for its own ends, to make use of the numbers and the enthusiasm of the Chartists. It was only when the increased strength of the workers as an organised class, with their Trade Union and Co-operate movements, enabled them to demand rights, that their masters made any concessions. The facts of history are against the notion that the growth of democracy has been due to general "liberalising" of social ideas and attitudes : political rights have really been won by organised class-power.

There has been in England, of recent years, a great increase in State expenditure on social services ; but for all that the ideal of the true community is still far up in the clouds. In the "*Economic Journal*" of December, 1929, Professor Ginsberg showed how, in spite of a certain increase of mobility upwards in the present generation, there seems no indication that the reserves of ability in the lower classes are being depleted. In the columns of the "*Times*," there appear letters deploring, in the first instance, the wickedness of some section of the community in pressing for increased expenditure on social services which benefit them and their children, and urging, in the next, the importance of so reducing taxation that other sections

5 J. L. & Barbara Hammond, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

may have more to spend on themselves. "As long as they are sure," says Professor Tawney, "that they are masters of the situation and will hold what they have, they are all kindness and condescension." Workers, say, in Glasgow are living in conditions of unspeakable dirt and degradation, while a diamond millionaire from South Africa vouchsafes to the press the precious information that he had spent on redecorating his Surrey mansion, lately burnt down, the sum of £25,000.⁶ The "two nations" of which Disraeli spoke, have not yet coalesced to form a single community.

In France, the classic land of "liberty, equality and fraternity," the demand of the Paris workers, always referred to by middle-class historians as "the mob," that liberty and equality should apply to them as to their betters, was met, notably in 1871 by the most ruthless whiff of grapeshot. The Denikins and Wrangels and Kolchaks had no compunction in attempting to destroy the social economy of Russia in the interests of privilege. The janissaries of Austrian fascism felt no qualms in relentlessly sweeping away the achievements of social democracy. The idea of community is irrelevant in China or in the countries of South America, which are potentially rich beyond all dreams, while the workers and peasants are poor beyond description. Japan is far-famed for her supposed social solidarity; but five great firms there control almost the entire industrial life while the annual interest on the peasants' debt is greater than the yearly value, in depression prices, of the total agricultural

⁶ Cf. A. Hutt "Condition of the Working Class Great Britain" (1939) R. H. Tawney "Equality" (1931).

produce.⁷ What, then is the reality of community when the fundamental power in every capitalist "democratic" country is Money Power ?⁸

In war-time, we hear, devotion to the community is at its white heat. But what a cruel deception is practised by the powers that be, what tiny ends are unwittingly served by men who felt patriotism tearing their heart-strings ! Few will be found to deny that the British occupation of Egypt was undertaken in the interests of British bondholders, or that the South African war was simply as a sordid chase for gold. The long story of intervention and war in Mexico or South America culminating in the infamous savagery over Gran Chaco, is a dreadful record of capitalist cupidity. The race for oil, for coal, for timber, for fortifications in an imperial chain ; the inhuman barbarities of the Congo, the strangulation of Korea and Manchuria ; the fight between Germany and the Entente for world hegemony—they are all variations on a single theme, a theme that, whatever its explanation, has not the slightest affiliation with the idea of community. The Briey scandal during the Great War is probably the most shameful instance of the deliberate sacrifice of the communal interest to the avarice of a few.

The search of the community leads, thus, to the melancholy conclusion that though we instinctively

7 "The Aims of Japan" by 'Eurasian', *"Political Quarterly"* July-September, 1934.

8 On this theme, see R. D. Charques and A. H. Ewen "Profits and Politics" (1933).

9 See "Patriotism, Limited" (Union of Democratic Control 1933). On this topic, see generally Laski's article in "The Intelligent Man's Way to prevent War" (1933), and also his "The State in Theory and Practice" (1935).

desire it, our social economy persistently thwarts its development. There may be, sometimes, an appearance of community ; but that is because men, inured to slavery, have been known to hug their chains and rend the would-be liberator. The danger of revolt is, of course, obviated in such cases ; but such a system is without reserves, the potential energy of intelligent will-power that might have been available in times of stress, is lacking. The apparent tranquillity makes a more profound disharmony ; constraint has extirpated those rudiments of free co-operation that are the breath of the life of society. Community, in short, cannot be, when there is not an unfaked identity of interest.

It is, of course, a fact that at present the higher income groups supply in proportion to their numbers many more persons of distinction and high social achievement. This is often used as an argument for the intrinsic superiority of those groups, whose privilege is, thus, a guarantee of service to the community. But, with more logic, it can be made an argument for the expansion of opportunity. Successful men flatter themselves with the reflection that ability is entirely the victor in competition. But ability is not, as G. E. G. Gatlin has put it, like a pound of butter, either there or not there. It needs an appropriate atmosphere for its growth and there is any amount of evidence that difference of nourishment for instance, results not only in difference of physical size, as Mr. Tawney has shown, but also in the difference of the capacity to put up a fight in this harsh world of ours. Most of us live in the haunting fear of insecurity ; the beauty of living is not for us. If ours was a truly organic society, we would not see the indifference or somewhat contemptuous pity usually

felt towards poverty. Any objective test, that is, reveals a very low state of community sentiment, a deficient 'we-feeling.' Community, let it be emphasised, essentially denotes the more positive aspects of social interaction. So long, therefore, as the personality and interests of the overwhelming majority are ineffective, it is, at best, dormant. So long as what are called the lower orders continue to be those that live by obeying orders, community remains an abstraction. As Lenin called liberty under capitalism a bourgeois illusion, we may call community in the same context a myth. Society must be classless, if community is to be a reality.

THE CHALLENGE OF NATIONALISM

I

The Austrian poet, Grillparzer, once remarked that 'humanity-through nationality, returns to bestiality.'

To prophets of nationality like Mazzini, nationalism was the very breath of life stirring in a people, while to Acton, it seemed to be something sinister, whose course, he predicted, 'will be marked by material and moral ruin, in order that a new invention may prevail over the interests of mankind.' Acton was not far wrong if we take into account the post-war world, which exhibits the menace of opposing nationalisms to the unity or even the maintenance of civilisation. Despite Geneva and Locarno, and talks of European Customs Unions and armament protocols, and despite the contempt with which the idea of nationality is regarded by men like Tagore,

it would be folly to forget that the problem of nationality and of national jealousies is still far from a solution. 'To refuse,' said Lenin, referring to nationalism, 'the thing that is, cannot be permitted ; recognition forces itself.' It would be blindness to ignore, for instance, that economic nationalism is a dominant feature of the world to-day, that import 'quotas,' export bounties, subsidised railway rates to and penal railway rates from the frontiers, and a whole labyrinth of measures for the restriction of international exchanges, have been and are being elaborated by the civil services of different countries. A certain British economist, we hear, keeps a 'tariff map' of the world. He puts up along the many frontiers little paper walls varying in height to indicate the scale of the tariffs of each State. Europe, on his map, resembles, says John Strachey, nothing so much as the cross section of a prison with each nation cowering immured in its own little economic cell. Great Britain has become a protectionist country. Ottawa intended the isolation of the British Empire from the current of world trade—an intention that has been partly thwarted, not so much by the forces of economic internationalism, as by acute national rivalries within the Empire. International lending has come almost to a standstill. The United States Congress is in a frenzied nationalist mood. France and Germany are not exactly friendly. Starvation stalks in Eastern and Central Europe against a background of bitter internecine hostility.

Nationalism has, indeed, become something like a new religion. The hooked cross of Germany, the statue of Italia, the eternal flame burning before the grave of the Unknown Soldier under the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, are the symbols of worship. The 'Buy British' mood of

Britain expresses, with less theatrically, the same spirit ; the recent mass hysteria over the King's Jubilee is another Anglo-Saxon variation on the same theme. One needs only a conversation with a young, ingenuous Italian fascist ; one needs only to have been present at students' meetings, even in pre-Hitler Germany, where the proceedings opened with the spirited singing of 'Deutschland, uber alles,' or to have read Moller van den Bruck's 'Germany's Third Empire' or Friedrich Sieburg's 'Germany, my country' ; one needs only to have tramped the streets of Paris all day on July 14, the anniversary of the fall of the Bastille, to be persuaded of the strength and genuineness of nationalist fervour. It is not so difficult to understand the causes of Hitler's amazing ascendancy, after one reads the report of a speech by Professor Naumann at a teachers' conference at Cologne : 'It may sound barbaric, but nevertheless it is true : Germany has an abundance of beautiful poems, splendid grammars and philosophical systems. Even if nothing new were added to it, we would have a treasure on which we could live for hundreds of years to come. But of Danzig or Vienna, or of the Saar district of Eupen, there is a great lack at present in Germany. For all that, Danzig and Vienna are at the moment more beautiful to us than a beautiful poem and more valuable than a clever book,—especially if the beautiful poem or the clever book were such that they could have been made as well in Paris or Poland.'¹ The Saar, which was a kind of barometer of German national prestige, is now part of the Fatherland

¹ '*Berliner Borsenzeitung*,' December 20, 1933 : quoted in '*International Literature*,' No. 4, 1934.

as a result of a memorable plebiscite which has been the high-water mark of recent German nationalism. But, as every newspaper reader knows, there is no lack in Europe to-day of 'irredentas' which are like so many powder magazines liable to be suddenly on fire. The Polish corridor, the district of Vilna, Upper Silesia and Macedonia, zones in dispute between Italy and Austria, between Italy and Jugo-Slavia, between Hungary and Roumania, between Hungary and Jugo-Slavia, between Italy and Greece—are all danger-spots where the light of peace finds it hard to penetrate. On top of all this, there are the claims of puissant nations to what are euphemistically called 'places in the sun'—most notably, today, of Italy in Africa and of Japan in the Far East. It is no wonder, then, that the recurrent theme in contemporary politics is the problem of peace, which largely resolves itself into the problem of nationalism and its sinister corollary, imperialism.

II

The historical evolution of modern nationalism takes us little further back than some 150 years. The peculiar conditions of England were responsible for its appearance there earlier than anywhere else. Henry VIII, hungering for matrimonial bliss, invoked it in the name of religion ; Elizabeth, with her eye on overseas trade and the spoil of Spanish galleons, invoked it with incantations on 'this precious stone, set in a silver sea.' France before 1789 was little more than a congeries of Gascons, Provencals, Bretons, Normans, Alsatians and others ; the defence of the Revolution against the alliance of crowned heads began French nationalism. German nationalism was created by

Napoleon; Fichte's 'Addresses to the German Nation,' which became the Bible of German patriotism, followed the battle of Jena and preceded the War of Liberation in 1813. Italians, oppressed and divided by priests, Bourbons and Hapsburgs, found a release in the hope, magistrally expressed by Mazzini, to lead the world again as they had done from the time of St. Francis to that of Michelangelo. Slav nationalism, pugnaciously prominent since 1848, claimed from the rest of the world a reverent acknowledgement of its primacy in mysticism and the not easily discernible wisdom which is supposed to be its concomitant.

Dostoevsky once said that every people must look upon itself as the 'God-bearing people' in order to have any faith in its future. Danger lurks in this advice, for there is no knowing when a nation comes to believe in its monopoly of God's wisdom, and if it does, its evangelical zeal may not be palatable to other peoples. To Mazzini, nationality was sacred, because 'God has written one line of His thought on the cradle of each nation.' England, he decided, was to specialise in business and colonisation, Russia to civilise Asia, Poland to be the champion of the Slavs; Germany was to think, France to act, and Italy to unite thought and action. A non-Italian, presumably, was expected to acquiesce, without demur, in the pre-eminent role assigned to Italy. Mazzini refused to Ireland a national mission of its own and therefore its claim to national independence; of Asia, he did not deign to think more than to consign her to the tender mercies of 'civilisers' from imperialist Britain and Czarist Russia. With all his desire to be fair as between different European nations, his predilection for his own continually broke out in rapturous panegyrics on the Italy that was to be.

In a recent Nazi book, 'The Fundamentals of Anthropology' by Professor Hermann Gauch, there occurs this astounding statement : "The non-Nordic is not a 100% human being ; he is, in fact, not a human being at all, if compared with the animal, but merely an intermediary, a link ... [he] comes next to the man-apes." Nothing very different, probably, was meant by Fichte when he said that 'to have character and to be German undoubtedly mean the same.' His "Addresses" of 1807 begin by explaining the superiority of the German to all others, because he alone had a pure language. He forgot, Bertrand Russell points out with his inimitable irony, that the Russians, Turks and Chinese, not to mention the Eskimos and Hottentots, had also pure languages. Hitler's henchmen today look upon race, not language, as the proof of German superiority, they are not without their forbears. Irish professors have written books to prove that Homer was an Irishman. French anthropologists have given archaeological evidence that the Celts, not the Teutons, were the pioneers of civilisation in northern Europe. Houston Chamberlain, the mysterious Englishman who did not live to see himself canonised by the Nazi movement, argued at length that Dante was a German and Christ was not a Jew. Anglo-Indians have always emphasised race and, through Kipling, imperialist England has caught the infection.¹

A nation, as any text-book on politics will tell us, connotes a geographical group and a sentiment of solidarity. This sentiment has considerable affinities with the crowd

1 See Bertrand Russell's 'Freedom and Organisation' (1934), and his article on "The Revolt against Reason" in *Political Quarterly*, January—March, 1935.

spirit. In times of crisis, particularly, a nation behaves as a crowd does ; the emotional tone of both is more or less similar ; there is the same unreasoning love and hate, the same inflated egoism, the same de-individualising sense of absorption into a larger whole, the same thrill of a vaguely apprehended common purpose. The cheering crowds before Buckingham Palace on the day of the declaration of war on Germany, genuinely represented, for the time being, the entire British nation.

The sentiment of national solidarity may be due to a common language, a supposed common descent, a common culture and traditions, or common interests and common dangers. In the majority of cases, all these play a part in producing national sentiment, but however the sentiment is produced, it is the only essential to the existence of a nation. As Renan discovered, it is impossible to define nationality except in terms of the sense of nationality, which, obviously, is a reality. We think ourselves a nation, and we are a nation ; " 'tis thinking makes it so." But, of course, we do not think that way till the stage is set for it,—which accounts for the late emergence of nationalism in history. We must not forget that nationalism, as such, is not a bit more 'natural' than tribalism, clannishness or imperialism ; we can shake it off when the material environment so demands. The authors and propagandists of modern nationalism have been the men of brains and,—this is important, of some means—belonging most often to the middle classes. The time had come for them to assert themselves and they did through the medium, very largely, of nationalism that fortunately, had in it elements which could powerfully attract the masses. Palacky, the great historian and

nationalist of Bohemia, tells us² that if the ceiling of the room in which he and some of his friends were dining one night had collapsed, the Czech nationalist movement would have been destroyed ; it was still of a small group and had not yet captured the masses. Equally illuminating tales—though Palacky's conclusion is a little too sweeping—might be told of the beginnings of nationalism in many countries.

Nationalism, thus, is not instinctive with the masses, any more than with the classes. Most of us are nationalists, because our fathers have, consciously or unconsciously, drilled us into it. It never occurs to us to question the adoration of the flag or other national symbols. This is because our mind is a social product ; we repeat, without knowing it, the formulas and fantasies and frauds that are 'of good repute.' Nationalism, besides, is strong because it touches a genuine chord in our hearts ; it strives, however clumsily, to satisfy our hunger for community. But its form and character have been determined by history, which clearly disproves its immutability ; at critical junctures, for example, class interests have been found more powerful than considerations of national policy. The French emigres, we all know, helped Germany against France in 1792 ; the Russian middle classes allied themselves alternately with Germany and the Entente Powers against the Revolution ; the ruling classes in the East who, for a time, welcomed Russian revolutionary propaganda as an aid in the struggle against European imperialism, later

² C. J. H. Hayes : 'Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism', (ed 1931), p. 294.

got alarmed at the danger to their own interests and opposed it bitterly. Nationality, of course, admits, in theory, no grades, no hierarchy of membership ; but, as a matter of fact, the susceptibility of the helpless masses to propaganda which money controls, means in the last resort the dominance of a class. The smoke-screen of nationalism is so often put up, that the people may not notice the deception. It is a relief, therefore, to be able to know that nationalism is not an unchangeable element of our nature, that it is permissible to hope for a time, in the distant future maybe, when the inconvenient idiosyncrasies of locality will not hamper our common humanity.

But this should not blind us to the phenomenal power for good and for evil that nationalism commands today. For the present, at any rate, both tribalism and the antipodal position of cosmopolitanism are definitely unsatisfactory. We cannot afford to forget the lesson of the debacle of international socialism during the Great War. The Basel manifesto of 1912 became a dead letter two years latter and erstwhile socialists flocked to fight under their national banners. A mere scratch discovered that they were still more in love with their nation than with the common cause of the workers of the world. We must not forget, on the other hand, the part played by love of country in the first great victory of socialism. The spectacle of Russian courtiers, generals, landowners, capitalists and merchants, the very men who claimed a monopoly of patriotism, invading their own country in a desperate effort to recover their profits, with the ubiquitous aid of the invading expeditions of half the world, did not a little to rally the masses of the people to fight

for a socialism which meant also their national liberation. We must, in short, if we learn from history, discover an internationalism which does better justice by the notion of the local community.

III

Over a sixth of the earth's surface, in the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, the national question is being tackled in a manner which alone promises to solve the problems of nationalism. The immoral gospel of the nation is one of the most lethal dangers of our age and it is, unhappily, on the fore-front of the programmes of men like Mussolini and Hitler. In the U. S. S. R. nationalism is assigned a relative character; there is no question of a fulfilment of nationhood for its own sake, for the sake of its sublimity and its historic mission. With the achievement of socialism, nationalism as we know it will disappear, it is being taken into account at present only in order that the final goal may be more expeditiously reached.¹

Even the bitterest enemies of the Soviet Union do not deny that its 'national policies,' the treatment, in other words, of former subject peoples of the Czarist empire, are one of its most notable successes. In one great gesture after the Revolution, the Union renounced all priorities and capitulations and concessions and privileges which the Czarist government had enjoyed in Asiatic countries along with the other Great Powers. Lenin expanded the slogan, 'Proletarians of the world, unite' into 'Proletarians of all countries, and oppressed peoples of all the world,

¹ In this section, I have borrowed heavily from Hans Kohn's very valuable book on 'Nationalism in the Soviet Union' (*ed.* 1933).

unite !', and the declaration of the rights of the peoples of Russia was followed almost immediately by a proclamation to the Mohammedan workers of Russia and the East, calling on them to organise their national life in complete freedom and with the aid, whenever necessary, of the Russian proletariat. The banner of the Union dispensed with all national emblems—the lions, eagles and bears, the beasts of prey of the State—and showed, as symbols of the new evangel of labour, a sickle and hammer on a sun-lit globe framed in ears of corn, with interwoven ribbons bearing in different languages the motto : 'Proletarians of all countries, unite !'

Within the territory of the U. S. S. R. there are extremes, not only of climate but also of culture. But where the Czar's Government had violently to repress scores of subject peoples, the Soviet Union has been able to encourage every ethnic group within its borders. The culturally advanced Ukrainian and the nomadic, illiterate Uzbek, the Great Russian and the gypsy, are equally free to develop their national personalities. Huge amounts have been spent for providing the basis for local industries in the national republics. Scores of races and millions of people were condemned under the pre-revolutionary system to what has been called 'planned backwardness.' Bolsheviks, on the other hand, have begun to build a textile industry in Turkestan, where cotton can be grown, and under their fostering care, distant Caucasus is becoming an industrial centre. There has, then, been no remissness in recognising that it would be sheer hypocrisy to suggest that the Uzbek was 'free' to develop his culture if, in the absence of industrial equipment, he had to toil sixteen hours a

day ; he must have freedom of a very different sort from the freedom we all have 'to own a Rolls and dine at the Ritz.'

Before the revolution, the language of the administration, the Courts and the government schools for the whole Empire, was Russian, though Russians formed no more than 43% of the population. There was, of course, one official religion, that of the Orthodox Church, and all non-Russians, in Asia and along the Volga, had no civil rights. Until 1905, it was illegal to print books in Ukrainian, White Russian and Lithuanian. Today in the U. S. S. R., with its 185 peoples and 147 languages, there is no imposed privilege for a people or for a language. Elaborate minority legislation assures to the minorities, among other things, their schools and the official employment of their own languages. For a number of languages, even alphabets had to be improvised. Local officials and members of economic bodies, if they happen to be outsiders, have got to learn the local language. There are now academies for issuing dictionaries, publishing institutions, libraries, theatres, museums, historical and scientific societies, in formerly barbarous tracts ; the film and the wireless are steadily being requisitioned for the purpose of developing the language. Since 1929, the Latin script has replaced, throughout the Union, the complicated Arabic, calculated, as it were, to prolong the cultural sleep of the Asiatic peoples ; the way was led by Azerbaijan, the first Mohammadan state to renounce the Arabic script even before Kemalist Turkey, and to adopt legislation for women's emancipation. Moscow gypsies have issued the first wall-newspaper and staged the first play in their gypsy language. 'Red Yurts' and 'Red kitabikas' have been

instituted in areas inhabited by nomads and semi-nomads,—transportable tents with which teacher and doctor and midwife and library go from camp to camp. 'The mountain women's huts' work in a similar way in the Caucasian mountains and their remote and sequestered valleys.

The propaganda for women's emancipation has been in full force since 1927; it was not possible earlier to make a frontal attack on age-long superstitions in some of the most backward tracts of the world. Before the Soviet could intervene, 'unfaithful' women were done to death by stoning. Many women, whose names we do not know, paid with their lives for laying aside the veil or for other modernising tendencies. It was not till the Communist Party was strong enough among the indigenous populations that it became possible to combat energetically the influence of the feudal landowner and the Mohammedan priesthood with their ecclesiastical courts. Wife-purchase and rapine are now punishable offences; but, unlike in modern Turkey, there has been no direct legislation against the veil. Today in such advanced Mohammedan territories as the Crimea, one never sees the veil, though it still lurks in remote nooks of Central Asia. In recent years, more than 1500 women have been elected chairmen of village soviets in the eastern Soviet states. The Supreme Court of Justice in Kazakstan had in 1932 a woman president; another was a member of the Council of People's Commissars. The youth of the Mohammedan peoples, young men and women alike, are firmly treading the path of progress, and this has all been due to the remarkable success of the Union's 'Nationality policy.' The freedom for national minorities has produced a high

flower of culture ; a new intellectual life is astir on sites where superstition and dark ecclesiastical reaction once reigned supreme.

IV

The *welfare* of different peoples, thus, is mutually compatible, but their *power*, with its cruel concomitant, competition, is not. Socialism, essentially international, provides, as the Russian example shows, an objective basis for co-operation instead of conflict between the peoples of the world. Capitalist states, on the other hand, as Mr. Hawtrey, himself a highly intelligent defender of capitalism, pointed out in his 'Economic Aspects of Sovereignty,' are always conscious that the gain of one country is necessarily loss to others, and its loss gain to them. Conflict, thus, is of the essence of the pursuit of power, the bellicosity of Fascism, whose idol is the nation-state, illustrates this to a fault. In the context of capitalism, it is impossible for nationalism to shake off its Jacobin heritage, and the insane forces of destruction will gamble freely with our fates. All the experience we can garner from history, past and present, tells us that Capitalism cannot lead us, as men like H. G. Wells seem fondly to hope, to world monopoly and so to peace, through gentle mergings of trusts and scientific federations of nations. It seems more probable that capitalist peace can only be established after a fight to the death among the great monopolist groups ; it would be a desert peace, the dread sequel to the last supreme war of the world.

Nationalism has, indeed, still a work to accomplish among the colonial peoples. A worm is in the staff of the imperial powers, and it shall not be long before immense

populations in Asia and Africa, that are today more or less their property, will find release from their bondage. But it is essential that there should be a conjunction of the forces of socialism and of nationalism, that there should be a relentless attack on that hydra-headed monster, imperialism, that the appeal of our liberation movement should be based, not alone on tribal community but on the wider community of social justice. It is doubtful if, in the absence of such conjunction, colonial peoples will be able to win; but even if they do, we shall see a crude repetition of the senseless disasters of present-day nationalism—disputed irredentas, economic rivalries and their sinister concomitants. The Fascist tendency of idolising the nation-state as a mystical instrument that at once completes and transcends the individual, will be in the ascendant. No one dares dismiss lightly the significance of nationalism, so immense in its influence, so instinct with tradition. But nationalism is, after all, the modern counterpart of tribalism, and it would be suicidal to enthrone it in our world on the adamant basis which Fascism intends to provide for it.

We have, thus, to avoid the Scylla of tribalism that ignores the demands of civilisation and the Charybdis of a cosmopolitanism that does not yet strike a sufficiently responsive chord in men's hearts. We can only do this, if nationalism and internationalism are both placed on a definitely socialist basis. It is no good being vaguely humanitarian, being naively rhapsodic about the brotherhood of all men. A mere pacifism is bound to be scoffed at and overwhelmed in times of crisis. It would be salutary, therefore, to remember that the brotherhood of man is an ideal which can only be realised under a

different social system, and that the urgent task of today is to do our best to hasten the advent of that system. It is imperative to think more of the brotherhood—the tangible unity of interests—of the workers of the world, of every nationality. Within the borders of a nation, besides, the national spirit can only be real, when we have put an end to the exploitation which divides fellow-nationals into conflicting classes. It is for socialists to make men feel that socialism alone can reconcile the claims of nationalism with the claims of cosmopolitan loyalty.

The aim of all government must be welfare, not power. before we can hope for a progressive unification of the world. Capitalism with its gospel of power, its competitive national loyalties, blocks the path to a saner and happier order. It has had its hour, when it performed a great historic function ; but now it is an encumbrance, its recurrent crises are longer and more acute, its periods of revival shorter and rarer. With nationalism, it has formed an alliance whose effect is disorder and disaster ; it is an unholy alliance, for, who can deny that capitalist imperialism is trampling upon the patriotism of a dozen peoples ? It seems to excite for its own purposes a brutal parody of patriotism, a banal jingoism in the more powerful countries. We must, therefore, remember that capitalism, of which imperialism is the highest stage, represses on purpose the fullest development of nations which can conveniently be exploited, and keeps them, as the empire of the Tsars was kept, in a sort of planned backwardness. Nationalism, if it deserves to claim our loyalty, must, then, be put on a socialist basis. We hope, indeed, for a time when nationalism, as we know it, shall be relegated to the museum of antiquities, when the

cultural heritage of the race will be pooled in a human synthesis. That, however, is a distant ideal ; none of us perhaps, will live to see it in practice. For the moment, nationalism seems, from one angle, a colossal power for evil ; from another, a tremendous power for good, if only it is allied with the struggle for a society where the conflict of classes will have ceased, where opportunity will be organised on the basis of the principle of equality. The hope of the world lies in this alliance between socialism and nationalism ; the sole example of such an alliance is found to have released the creative energy of scores of neglected peoples in the U. S. S. R. Without it, the prospect for the future is uninviting, for, in that case, as Bertrand Russell aptly quotes from Milton to introduce his 'Freedom and Organisation' :

'Chaos umpire sits,
And by decision more embroils the fray
By which he reigns : next him, high arbiter,
Chance governs all.'

RELIGION AND THE PEOPLE

“**T**he social principles of Christianity justified the slavery of the classical days ; they glorified medieval serfdom ; and they are able to defend the oppression of the proletariat, though with a somewhat crestfallen air. The social principles of Christianity proclaim the need for the existence of a ruling class and a subjugated class, being content to express the pious hope that the former will deal philanthropically with the latter. The social principles of Christianity assume that there will be compensation in heaven for all the infamies committed on earth, and thereby justify the persistence of these infamies here below. The social principles of Christianity explain that the atrocities perpetrated by the oppressors on the oppressed, are either just punishments for original or other

sins, or else trials which the Lord in His wisdom ordains for the redeemed. The social principles of Christianity preach cowardice, self-contempt, abasement, submission, humility, in a word, all the qualities of the 'canaille'; and the proletariat which will not allow itself to be treated as 'canaille' needs courage, self-confidence, pride, a sense of personal dignity and independence, even more than it needs daily bread. The social principles of Christianity are lickspittle, whereas the proletariat is revolutionary. So much for the social principles of Christianity !"

There is no need for an apology for this extended quotation from Marx which lays bare, with the passionate vigour of the prophet, implications not only in Christianity but in every other form of organised, institutionalised religion, that the writers, whose name is legion, so often conveniently forget. No doubt, religion has been the supreme expression of every historical epoch. An elaborate ritual and symbolism and an equally elaborate mythology have at given periods contributed to the interpretation, acceptable to contemporary minds, of man's place in the universe; significance could only thus be attached to what was otherwise incomprehensible, a tale told by an idiot—the processes of life set in the mute and stolid environment of Nature. No student of religion, least of all its critics, can deny its supreme importance as a social factor. Marx himself described it as "the generalised theory of this world, its encyclopaedic compend, its logic in a popular form," and hence, as he put it, "the criticism of religion is the beginning of all criticism."

II

There is no end to the number of definitions of religion, and more has been written about it than perhaps on any

other subject under the sun. Newman's statement that "the essence of religion is authority and obedience" may not be palatable to many of us, but the great Cardinal has given us an honest definition that is more in conformity with the facts than most others. Modernists would probably dislike Rudolf Otto's hypothesis that man is endowed with a 'sensus numinis,' a sense of awe, which reveals itself in a longing for something which is "altogether different" from the nature of man ("*das ganz andere*" is one of his favourite expressions). Most of our intellectual 'elite' would, it seems, prefer Matthew Arnold's famous definition of religion as "morality touched with emotion," or Whitehead's subtly alluring definition of it as "what a man does with his solitariness." They forget that while morality means the *pursuit* of the true and the beautiful and is thus ever in evolution, religion, if we are to be fairly precise in our terminology, implies something *eternally realised* or involved in the nature of things. They are probably unaware that when religion begins to stress its ethical appeal instead of its metaphysical powers, it is obvious that *as religion*, it is in a stage of decadence. They do not know that ethics, as all history shows, is not the essence of religion, though it certainly is one of its more important derivatives. They seek the answer to the "riddle of life," not in the reality of human labour and activity which is developing in every direction at a revolutionary pace, but in the depths of their own ego. They ignore what is to a student of sociology a more immediately vital sense in which religion is not what a man does with his solitariness, but what he does with his gregariousness. They do not, in effect, live and enrich the life about them; they hide and cling to

their miserable little "private estate," and as Gorki once said, rather unkindly, they recall, in their 'contemplative activity,' the Biblical hero, Onan.

Most definitions of religion are advanced from the point of view of a particular creed or attitude, and to offset their effect, it is necessary to point out the more universal essence of religion properly so-called. The etymology of the term itself is illuminating. Cicero derived it from the verb 'religere', that is, to execute perseveringly by means of repeated effort, while Lactantius, the "Christian Cicero", who lived in the first half of the fourth century, derived it from 'religare,' to bind together, and interpreted religion essentially as a bond of piety. These two interpretations suggest the subjective and objective aspects, closely interrelated, of religion, but in every sociological inquiry the major emphasis has to be laid on the objective phases of religion.

The work of men like Sir James Frazer furnishes us with the key to the understanding of religious evolution, and it is imperative to have some idea of their conclusions. Men, we learn, have ever felt strongly the need for some assurance that they are not altogether helpless and lonely in face of the majestic and rather awful indifference of the forces of nature around them. This assurance was supplied by religion which personified those forces as gods to be invoked and cajoled and propitiated. It was imperative, on the other hand, that some of the strongest instincts of men were to be most ruthlessly curbed if the stability of communities in the past was to be ensured. Religion supplied this need, when it provided that the natural forces of which man was so afraid, in their personified forms as the gods or as God,

forbade the "anti-social" acts. It was a sanction far more powerful than what could be provided by purely human agency. The certitude of eternal and dreadful punishment tended to perpetuate the forms of contemporary community life. The great majority of men were convinced, in effect, of the divine right of the powers that be. Religion became the cement of society, and before long it grew to be a powerful vested interest, more anxious than its protagonists know or care to know, about keeping the rabble in a state of satisfied servility. As Gibbon cynically remarked : "The various modes of worship, which prevailed in the Roman world, were all considered by the people, as equally true ; by the philosopher, as equally false ; by the magistrate, as equally useful."

The present crisis in capitalist culture finds its most crucial expression in the crisis in religious belief. Straightforward faith in the overt truth of religion is no longer easy, except for those who are not unprepared for the cheap and dangerous happiness of credulity. In his 'The Future of an Illusion,' Dr. Freud points out with a quiet irony, how the dogmas of religion claim our faith and support, "firstly, because our primal ancestors already believed them ; secondly, because we possess proofs, which have been handed down to us from this very period of antiquity ; thirdly, because it is forbidden to raise the question of their authenticity at all." It is no wonder that, as an American inquiry in 1934 showed, out of 1000 proletarians, those who worked fewer hours and got higher wages and therefore some opportunity for culture, were the least interested in religion and the church. In England, similarly, an identical questionnaire ['Do you

believe in a personal God?' 'Do you believe in personal immortality?,' 'Do you believe in any form of Christianity?' 'Are you an active member of any Church?,' | issued by the '*Nation and Athenaeum*' with its 'high-brow' clientele and the '*Daily News*' with its huge circulation among 'low-brows,' brought answers which showed that while among the latter, faith though weakened was still alive, it was almost dead among the former.² The ebb of religious belief has brought men face to face with their environment and the necessity of remodelling that environment. The knowledge acquired by civilised humanity has made the old simple beliefs impossible, but the application of that knowledge has not yet been made in such a manner that the consolations of religion would no longer be needed. The crisis of capitalism has meant many a paradox, that of poverty in the midst of plenty, of overproduction and underconsumption. There is, very naturally, a profound sense of disappointment; an increasing number of men are turning away from science and reason, and are seeking solace in the myths that served society during the childhood of the race. The more sophisticated turn towards what Julian Huxley has termed 'Religion without Revelation,' towards the 'God-building' for which Lenin castigated Gorki and Lunacharsky. We cannot do without the comforting illusions of religion in whatever shape or form today, because man has only conquered, very largely, the non-human part of his environment, but has not yet understood the nature of his relationship to his fellowmen and acted on that understanding. Those who are preparing

² *Ibid.* (cf. C. E. M. Joad : 'The Present and Future of Religion' (1931).

for this second conquest say with Marx that "The demand that one reject illusions about one's situation, is a demand that one reject a situation which has need of illusions."

III

Throughout the course of history, the mind's apprehension of reality has been mainly determined by its interests. Religion, from its earliest phases of primitive sorcery and witchcraft and totemism to the present-day individualist and ethical emphasis, has really served to keep intact the social body with its stratification into castes or classes. There is no getting away from the fact that religions have served and are serving material interests, and that religious teachings, more often than not, have acted as a social soporific. It is significant that the English Established Church, for instance, will more readily pardon an attack on 38 of its 39 articles than on 1/39th of its income.

Not much need be said about the part religion has played in our history; our quietism, our esotericisms, our resigned submission to the powers that be, are too well-known to require elaboration. Our spiritualism is little more than a mechanism of escape from the misery and futility of the life around us. We search our history in vain for social struggles on any large scale, for religion has done its work very thoroughly, the soporific dose has been successfully injected into our body-politic. The system of castes may have performed a useful service at some remote stage of our history, but its survival today, when it is flouted more often in theory than in practice, has meant a permanent stratification of the community and the degradation, sometimes too

cruel for words, of our fellows. Unlettered barbarians from Central Asia, whose only title was their sword, were admitted by our priests, centuries ago, into the honoured ranks of the Kshatriyas. But, of course, the sword meant power, and priests of all lands and ages have believed, very conveniently to themselves, that power is ordained of God. Not even the ablest apologist would succeed in explaining away the fatalism with which the law of '*karma*' has poisoned our society. All effort at social regeneration has been balked by the facile and pathetic hope of a less miserable life in the next round of one's existence. For centuries our social leaders have had the infernal effrontery of calling millions of their fellow-humans "untouchables," some of whom were deemed so lowly that even their shadow would pollute the path of a bloated Brahmin. Our leaders today think they are expiating for the sins of their fathers by finding a new name for the so-called "untouchables ;" they are *harajans*, the people of God. One does not understand how one connects these unfortunates whom society has been treating with damnable indifference and contempt, with the special favour of God. The idea, probably, is that God has kept them in a kind of special enclosure for his devotees to pity, for otherwise how can the comfortable votaries of God exercise their patronage and philanthropy? Many of our best men talk about *Daridra-narayan*, about God coming to us in the guise of those who are poor and heavy-laden. Presumably, God's pious worshippers will find their occupation gone when the poor are no longer there to receive their self-righteous commiseration! The pity of it all is that those who talk of *Harijans* and of *Daridra-narayana*

have neither the time nor the inclination to think clearly of the implications of what they say. It is only one of the melancholy symptoms we always come across of our almost total lack of a social sense, a lack which has been accentuated by our hopelessly disproportionate preoccupation with the supposed spiritual outlook with which, by some esoteric process, we profess to be endowed. In the context of our social history, it is not surprising that only a few years ago orthodox Hindus and Muslims formed an unholy alliance in their senseless opposition to an elementary piece of social legislation, the Sarda Act. Orthodoxy here, and everywhere, has formed a league with the ruling power, with the object, not of what is called the preservation of religion, but of maintaining its stake—and a very material stake at that—in the country. Few care to think of the root cause of the vice and beggary which infest the places of pilgrimage. Religious conformity and social obscurantism go hand in hand together, and even those who would like to think of themselves as reformers assume and often welcome the continuance, for as long as they care to see in the future, of the present class-structure of society.

In the West as in the East, the alliance of religion with obscurantism is evident to any student of history. It is a miserable subterfuge to say that slavery was condemned "implicitly" by the early Christian Fathers, for in that case one must in honesty remember that every ancient moralist, from whom credit is withheld, had done the same. To quote the rather rare passages in which the Fathers of the Church urged the humane treatment of slaves is neither here nor there, for every

moralist had done so too. It is more to the point to remember what St. Augustine, the greatest of the Fathers, wrote in justification of slavery: "The first cause of slavery," wrote Augustine in his 'The City of God,' "is sin—that a man should be put in bonds by another; and this happens only by the judgment of God, in whose eyes it is no crime." The greatest Pope of the fifth century, Leo the Great, ruled that no slave could become a cleric lest his "vileness" should "pollute" the sacred order. The greatest Pope of the sixth century, Gregory the Great, was the richest slave-owner in Europe, forbade slaves to marry free Christian women, and very significantly, emancipated two of his slaves who had money and promised to leave it to the Church. There is no denying that neither the Christian Church nor any Christian body ever condemned slavery until modern times, and even then one discovers that a generation after Western Europe had formally renounced slavery, the churches in the Southern American States were ardently defending the system. There is every proof that ancient slavery decayed for economic reasons and that slavery was openly abolished only in the sceptical nineteenth century.³

In the first century of the Christian era, there was a general belief that the world was soon going to end, and thus an ecclesiastical machinery was not carefully built up. It was only after that belief vanished that the clergy established itself as a separate class and began to fatten upon the contributions of the faithful. By the ninth century, the richer members of the clergy owned from 75,000 to 140,000 acres of land; those less

3 See Joseph McCabe: 'The Social Record of Christianity' (1935).

rich from 25,000 to 50,000 ; and the poorest of the bishops and abbots possessed from 5000 to 7500 acres.⁴ In the next three hundred years this wealth multiplied itself and the Church became a business organisation on an international scale. This is no surprise in the context of the history of religion, for several millenniums previously, as we learn from Hammurabi's code of laws, the Temple of Shamash executed many transactions and usually collected 20% interest, the rate rising to 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ % and even to 40% in the case of loans on grain.⁵ It is interesting, in this connexion, to recall the intimate relationship between one of the Krishna cults and certain Hindu trading and banker sects (Vallabhacharyas), between the merchants' guild and the Temple of Mercury in Rome, between the banking and ritual activities of the ancient temples of China. It is not insignificant that the magnificent edifice of the Moscow Stock Exchange used to belong to an immensely wealthy 'Lavra' (group of monasteries).⁶

The increasing rigidification of class structure is reflected in the characteristics of the early gods as in the constitution of the medieval Church. The Edda, 'Harpardsljod' depicts the antagonism between the crude peasant god Thor, and the more refined god of the nobility, Odin. "Odin is master of the nobles who fall on the field of battle. Thor is master only of slaves." In India, Agni tended to take on more and more the characteristics of the priestly caste, as Indra did of the

4. Figures in J. W. Thompson's 'An Economic and Social History of the Middle Ages,' p. 653, quoted by Calverton, *op. cit.* p. 411.

5 Cf. N. Bukharin : Historical Materialism, Int Pub., N. Y. (1934).

6 Article on 'Religion' by A Bertholet in the Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences (ed. 1934).

warrior caste. In a more developed society, there appear class divisions within the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The hatred of the rich which had been an inherent part of the early Christian creed disappeared. Even Gratian who contended that communism was the ideal state and that private property and the good life were incompatible, conceded that the wealthy need not give away their riches in order to escape sin.⁷ The plebeian clergy, the Waldensians, Albigensians, Catharis and others whose social notions did not square with those of the church aristocracy were condemned and persecuted as heretics.

In the peasant revolt in Holland, in upper Swabia and Frisia, which culminated in the Peasants' War in Germany, religious leaders played an infamous part. The great Martin Luther could without a tremor advise the mercenaries of the German princes: "Stab, kill, hit here, whoever can. Remember that nothing can be more poisonous, harmful and devilish than a revolutionary." In the summer of 1525, 1,50,000 persons, mostly peasants, were killed, often with revolting savagery; and those who warn the world against irreligion by exaggerating the massacre of 2000 priests and aristocrats during three years of the French Revolution, never mention this orgy of evangelical brutality.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, some ten million African negroes were conveyed to America in conditions of such callous brutality that only the toughest could survive the ordeal. The Spanish theologians whom Queen Isabella consulted could only reply that the Church had never condemned slavery. The English and French

7 Cf. Max Beer: 'Social Struggles in the Middle Ages.'

joined in the profitable trade as eagerly as the Spaniards and Portuguese. Even Christian apologists have had to admit that the guilt of this great crime rests on the Church as an organised body.

The work of Troeltsch and Weber and Tawney has shown the historic importance of Calvin, who was not only the social and religious dictator whose fiat would be the law in many lands, but was also the propounder of rules, in regard to the taking of interest, for example, which were essential to the needs of the rising business class. While Augustine had stigmatised business as sin, while Tertullian had declared that with the removal of covetousness, there would be no need for trade, while Aquinas and a host of others had condemned usury and devoted considerable thought to such conceptions as that of the "just price," Calvin assured all that in working for oneself one also works for the greater glorification of God, that one's selfish impulses and religious ideals are capable of a new and hitherto unknown harmony. Even Dissent, with its lower middle-class outlook, showed the masses no way out. Harrison and his Fifth Monarchists, Winstanley and the Diggers got short shrift from their betters. Success in business became for the Puritan a test of religious grace and poverty the proof of God's disfavour.

The Wesleyan movement in 18th century England drew men's attention away from the appalling evils and cruelties of the Industrial Revolution. The Church, as usual, exalted the '*status quo*,' but the impetus of the Wesleyan revolt directed the mind towards individual salvation and a kind of spiritual security. "Where riches accumulated," writes Prof. Laski, "they could be

regarded 'as the blessing of god ; where they were absent their unimportance for eternal happiness could be emphasised." Even today, the evangelical zeal of the Welsh miners prevents them from attacking, as fervently as one would wish, the bases of a social system that condemn them to a beggarly existence.

The "saintly" Wilberforce used to speak of "the more lowly path" of the poor as having been "allotted to them by the hand of God ... it is their part faithfully to discharge its duties and contentedly to bear its inconveniences." Another "saintly" person, Hannah More, told her famine-stricken tenants how the gentry "would not have been able to afford such large supplies to the distresses of the poor, had they not denied themselves for your sake many indulgences to which their fortune at other times entitles them." The Archbishop of Canterbury spoke of the Reform Bill of 1831 as "mischievous" and another bishop said : "I do not know what the mass of the people in any country have to do with the laws but to obey them." In 1832, fifteen bishops were still in opposition, even though the king was intimidated, to the Reform Bill. The head of the Church opposed the Education Bill of 1807. Only three bishops attended the House of Lords when in 1815 a bill was introduced to prevent the use of British capital in the slave trade. Two only voted for the Bill for the total suppression of the slave trade. The Church was obscurantist, and the misery incident to the cruel struggle for life that had to be incessantly waged by the masses evoked only what appears to us the ironical consolations of religion. "The poor," as Laski writes trenchantly, "were consigned to a God whose dictates

were by definition benevolent ; and if they failed to understand the curious incidence of his rewards, that was because His ways were inscrutable."⁸ There was no dearth of philanthropists, of "charitymongering acrobats" as Marx called them. They no doubt sincerely desired to see an improvement in the situation of the masses, but they were careful to exclude anything which might strengthen the discontent of the worker, or might encourage them to organise on their own behalf. Where God has been so patient, a reverend gentleman bids us remember, it is not for us to be impatient.

Towards social questions, thus, the Church has taken up a consistently reactionary attitude. It will defend to the last ditch the present distinctions of rank and fortune. It will have little to say, officially, in regard to the inhuman policy pursued in many parts of Africa towards the native today. During war, its point of view is at best equivocal, and not unoften chauvinistic ; when nationalist frenzy overtakes it, as it did during the first World War, it is bestial. Granville Hicks printed in the *American Mercury* in 1927 a number of ecclesiastical pronouncements on the war ; the palm goes to a Boston preacher who avowed that "three inches are not enough, seven inches are too many, for while you are pulling out the bayonet you are losing the opportunity to drive it into another man five inches. We must keep the flag and the cross together."⁹ No sophistry, no jugglery of argumentation can explain away the connection between missionary and trader and empire

8 See Mc. Cabe *op. cit.* ; J. L. and Barbara Hammond : 'The Town Labourer' ; H. J. Laski : 'English Political Thought from Locke to Bentham.'

9 Quoted by Calverton, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

builder, the financial adventures of Church corporations with shares in armament firms; the historic indulgence to the rich cleverly manipulated, most notably, by the Roman Church; the opposition of the clergy in many countries to educational or social or economic change. Religion and not laws, said Fustel de Coulanges, first guaranteed the right of property. Religion, history shows, has been and will be used by its protagonists in every conceivable way to prop up the social system that is based on the institution of private property.

IV

In a factory survey in the Soviet Union, stories of their severance from religion were collected from atheist working men. In 7 cases, it was the experience of the Revolution of 1905 that led to the severance; in 10 cases, the world war; in 26 cases, agitation in the Red Army; in 31 cases, the experiences of the October Revolution and of socialist construction; in 9 cases, disappointment with the clergy and revolt against the frauds of the church; five were directly converted by atheist agitation and five gave up God and the Church as a result of their own personal experiences. There are significant reports of conversations with Uzbek farmers in the collective farms of Central Asia. One was asked, for instance, "Tell me, do you still believe that *Shaitan* exists?" "O yes, he still exists and he can get me, but not in the collective!" "And why not in the collective?" "Because there we are many and if I should become learned and be an engineer, then he cannot get me at all!"¹⁰ In the early stages of a

10 J. F. Hecker: 'Religion and Communism' (1933), pp. 229-30, 238.9.

social revolution in our country, which will not be too long in coming, we too perhaps shall report such reactions on the part of our peasants.

True religion, one is sure to be told, is above all narrowness and institutional interests; it is a challenge to replace the world of power by that of spirit. Such talk is the kind of idealism that thrives on a "Robinson Crusoe" conception of society, that goes no further than a subjective desire to identify God with the true and the good and the beautiful, to define it as the idea which arouses and organises the social emotions. But as Lenin wrote in a famous letter to Gorki: "Your words being written went to the masses and their meaning was determined, not by these your good intentions, but by the correlation of social forces—by the definite objective interrelation of classes. Consequently these relations being what they are (whether you wish it or do not), what you have actually done is to embellish and sweeten the idea of the clericals, of Punishkevich, of Nicholas II and Struve. Because actually the idea of God helps them to keep the people in slavery. By redecorating the idea of God you actually repaired the chains by which the ignorant workers and peasants are bound."

A witty Frenchman is said to have remarked that Marxism like Christianity has its bible, its council, its schisms, its orthodoxies and heresies, its exegesis, sacred and profane. And like Christianity it has its mysteries, the principal one being the dialectic.¹¹ It spurs the faith of its supporters to the point of missionary zeal and martyrdom, in a manner which can only be

¹¹ Sidney Hook: 'Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx' (1933), p. 71.

paralleled in the history of religion. These comparisons are suggestive, but the socialist always will object to calling his creed a religion, partly because of the associations of that term. The communist party in the Soviet Union—the model of similar bodies everywhere—which is often compared with the Society of Jesus is not an Order ; its members get no separate training but go through the education given to the youth at large ; they are not cut off from the world, either by celibacy or any other distinguishing condition ; the party organised on a basis of democratic centralism is most certainly not a hierarchy. Socialists are not concerned with laying up treasures in heaven where moth and rust does not corrupt. Their work is here and now, to make this world a very much happier place, not for the providentially chosen few, but for all.

We in India suffer only too acutely from the effects of our preoccupation with religion and its rituals. But India's so-called spirituality is not really so deeply entrenched as many of our leaders would like to imagine. It is a mantle of myth in which our ego attempts to keep itself warm against the cold blasts of misery and degradation. It is something of a protective legend and we take some flattering unction to our souls in order to screen from our view defects in our social system which we cannot without shame defend. Social revolution in India will remain a distant ideal, till we can brace ourselves up to an attack on the miserable vested interests of prince and priest. It is easy, of course, for us to brag about our spirituality, for

“There's naught no doubt, so much the spirit calms

“As rum and true Religion.” (—Byron : ‘*Don Juan*’)

But it is fatal perpetually to yield to the subtle solaces of

outworn religion. We must boldly face the facts of our situation and try to diagnose their causes. We shall find, then, the close inter-relation between religion and the material interest of the classes in power. We shall discover, from the history of religion in every clime, that it is "the sigh of the oppressed creature, the opium of the people."*

* Reprinted from "*20th Century*" (Allahabad).

THE CRISIS IN CULTURE

A modern poet has felt and expressed the vile possibility, no longer very remote, of a breakdown of civilisation :

“... .. like history in Dark Ages where

“Truth lies in dungeons from which drifts no

whisper ·

“We hear of towers long broken off from sight

“And tortures and war in dark and smoky rumour,

"But on men's buried lives there falls no light."

—STEPHEN SPENDER : *Poems*.

That culture is threatened, the intellectual pauperisation of Fascist countries and the organised revival of superstition and illusion and blood-lust, tells us only too dismally. From the point of view of Fascists who have

plunged China and Spain into the cruellest of wars and are successfully blackmailing capitalist 'democracies' into helping them in their barbarian adventures, all thought to-day means what the Japanese war-lords picturesquely called "dangerous thoughts." The Nazi dramatist, Johst, echoing Goering, said exultantly, "when I hear the word 'culture,' I cock my revolver." It is no wonder that writers in countries which are happily not yet under the Fascist whip, are being shocked into the realisation that they can no longer, if they care for their work, take refuge in a superior mood of cynical indifference or a sort of pathetic fatalism. They have found that even the mask of the "pure artist" did not help save the German writer from Nazi persecution, that German culture could be uprooted with something like impunity because it had no living and real contact with the people. They have little patience with the scholastic and mystical nonsense which is the stock-in-trade of literature in Fascist countries to-day. Many of them are being painfully convinced that the promethean fire of enlightenment, meant, no doubt, for all mankind, is being used at present, as Day Lewis has lately put it, to stoke up the furnaces of private profit, that capitalism which at one time was a tremendous emancipatory force has now become static and reactionary, that the profit motive has so secured its stranglehold that capitalism can no longer utilise the new scientific, artistic and educative techniques created by itself. Capitalism, one is coming to feel, has no further use for culture.

This has not been an altogether sudden realisation, though of course barbarities of fascism and its blood-brother, imperialism, have come to many as a rather

unlooked-for and painful shock. Premonition of this realisation had been vaguely reflected in the tendency in literature towards "decadence"—a much-hated term which might, I fear, still cause annoyance, but which refers to a quality in certain types of writing which any one with literary sensitiveness cannot fail to notice. Decadence, of course, is not a term of abuse, but of definition; it has, besides, positive qualities of its own, for it produces degrees of analytic intelligence and sensitivity hardly to be matched in other and happier periods. Its colours are, as it were, the sunset colours of a civilisation—lovely, no doubt, but presaging the end to a chapter.

Quite sometime ago, Renan had said: "We live on the shadow of a shade, on the perfume of an empty flask. On what will they live who come after us?" It was not before very long that writers had to worry over this question. For a while, of course, it was roses, roses all the way; but the rose lost its scent soon enough under the strain of constant crossings and variations. The unhappy poet began running away, as Auden has put it: •

'To islands in your private seas

'Where thoughts like castaways find ease

'In endless petting.'

As things worsened, there were movements in literature, unfortunately too visible, "from irony to cynicism, from anger to exasperation, from wounds to nerves, from the love of living to the will to die." A sense of tragedy degenerated into a sense of despair which in its turn was succeeded by a mere sense of depression. Such was, generally, the mood of the writer when Fascism burst on his unhappy world, with its chronic civil war on the worker at home, and periodic cataclysms of international war. The "pure"

artist, content so long in his ivory tower, was reminded, rudely, of the relevance to present conditions of what Heraclitus had said more than two thousand years ago : "The waking have a common world, but the sleeping turn aside, each into a world of his own." They felt, with greater or less conviction, that he must wake up and fight to defend the cultural heritage which had begun already to decay and was now going to be destroyed by the Fascist barbarians who were menacingly seizing power in one country after another.

All these observations may seem irrelevant to conditions in our own country, but, in fact, they are not. We have come to look upon our country to-day as culturally almost a province of Europe. This is, surely, an exaggerated way of putting the thing ; but it is not just fictitious. Problems that agitate the writer in the West are here with us, and in a much more intensified form. Writers in Europe, and especially poets, are found to-day to be panting for a public. Ours are in a much worse predicament. The man whose 'metier' is the short story has often to write long novels for the doubtful delectation of middle-class housewives for whom novels serve much better as a kind of sleeping draught at midday. The late Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch once computed that leading poets in England in the last hundred years or so have almost all been wealthy, Keats alone being not fairly well-to-do, and concluded that the poor child in England had as much hope as the son of an Athenian slave to be emancipated into that intellectual freedom of which great writings are born. One need not labour the point that in our country, with its multitudinous problems of poverty and ignorance, problems that our political subjection has

fearfully accentuated, the position is a hundred times worse. Intellectual freedom is something of a luxury which we, in our base and practised submission to tyrants both at home and abroad, are hardly able to afford. In the West, again, the poet to-day finds he is no longer popular ; he is slowly but surely deprived of that feeling of writing for a wide audience which understood his language. He begins to write for a tiny circle and uses, inevitably, the private language of personal friends. More recently, there has been felt an urgent need of communicating to a larger audience, and also, sometimes, most hopefully, the imperativeness of a classless society which alone can guarantee the full exercise of the writer's powers. Something of the same process can be discerned here among our writers. On top of everything else, of course, our writers are being increasingly reminded of the urgency, from their own standpoint, of fighting imperialism and all its obscurantist allies, for till that fight is won, their work is bound to reflect the anaemia of a society inured to ages of passivity and servitude.

The writer or the artist who has found his kinship with the fight for a new society does not equate art with action, nor poetry which is something like hand-to-hand fighting with propaganda which is heavy artillery. Art, he knows, has its special function, the grasp and transmission of "experience." He should, however, be pardoned if he wonders why when one writes about spring and a girl's hair and "thirsting breasts," one is writing about "experience"; but while writing about the struggle in China or a peasant rally or a Jute Mill Strike, one is not writing about "experience." Surely, avowal of Marxism is not an automatic passport to artistic genius, but once

you get the person with the specific sensibility and the gift of expression, you cannot look on him as a creature in a vacuum. The writer's social affiliation must inevitably condition the character and the flavour of his experience, and in an era of developing class struggle such as ours, collective actions and class purposes significantly enacted in real life may well become themselves "experiences"—so profound and so important that as experiences, they transcend, certainly, flirtations and south winds and stars and nightingales and getting drunk in low-down places.

A critic with a fondness for similes said lately that writers to-day have to switch from the smooth macadam of bourgeois culture which is however leading them obviously into a morass, to a new clay road, hardly yet rolled. Marxists, besides, would add, lest they be misunderstood, that they claim, with perfect honesty, that they are the heirs-apparent to all that is best in traditional culture. We in India also, I hope, have begun to feel it badly. We have adopted, largely, it seems, the worst of both worlds. From our own past, with fatal discrimination, we have taken the mystical-devotional obsession which has long scotched our cultural development; from the West, we have tried, most disastrously, to borrow sentimental-aesthetic posturings. Our literature will not acquire reality and vitality unless it broadens so as to include the consciousness of the working masses of our country. The hard realities of their life, their zeal and unselfconscious freshness, their innate practicality and simple courage shall be our weapons to root out the anaemic tendencies in our cultural heritage which is surely not inconsiderable. For that, of course, a radical change in the political, economic and social structure of the

country must be achieved. The chief hope for our literature is our fight for freedom and social justice.

The writers and artists who are on the side of the worker and peasant will, of necessity, during the revolutionary and near-revolutionary periods, find that they must forge of their art a sword for use in the struggle which they cannot avoid. Not before the triumph of the cause can their work be less concerned with pressing and desperate social issues. Lamentations over the inadequacy of New Writing are thus, in reality, out of place. For there is indeed, no call for despair, and we may well remind ourselves of what Oliver St. John said in 1640 in quite another context : "Have no fear, it must be worse before it is better."*

* Read before the All India Progressive Writers' Conference, Calcutta, 1938.

ON PROGRESSIVE CRITICISM

Progressive criticism suffers, as a rule, from a twofold bane: on one hand, the over-exuberance of the pseudo-Marxist who forgets in his zeal that writing is a craft with a long and a unique tradition, and on the other, the sentimentalist who, applauding only the photographic portrayal of the sufferings of the poor and the lowly, label all else as reactionary. These are varieties of naivete, which must be shed by all who care for progress in literature.

The first and last word in progressive criticism is that life and letters are inseparable. There must, indeed, be something wrong with the artist when he glories in his seclusion, his 'ivory tower.' He may be forgiven his hermit idylls, if society like Olympus were a place of radiant calm,

Where falls not hail, nor rain, nor any snow,
Nor ever wind blows lightly
—in other words, a picturesque fantasy. Affirmation of life is the writer's richest prerogative—life in its brave gestations, its vivid, pulsating manifestations. The range and quality of his vision gives tone and strength to his work.

Let there be no mistake about it. Art lapses into artificiality when it gets out of touch with the realities of life. Writers must know the profound significance of the Hellenic myth of the giant Antaeus, whose strength was perpetually renewed so long as his feet remained planted on Mother Earth, but who became as weak as a kitten when Hercules lifted him into the air. This is not to deny the pure beauty of the authentic art that 'embalmed leisure' has produced ; this is not to express some disdain, some ignorance of that beauty in the single-minded scrutiny of 'motifs.' This is only to deny the validity of the identification by many people of the romantic tradition with poetry itself, the envisagement of the poet as a skylark or a nightingale, hid in some shady covert and soaring and swooning away in heights of a "spirituality" that kills humanity. This is only to affirm that this protest of withdrawal is neither sublime nor in keeping with the great tradition of poetry and of poets who were content to be men living in a world of men. This helps only to understand that the best writing of our time represents an attempt, with whatever degree of success, to return to the real world, an attempt by the writer to reintegrate himself with society.

With most of us, the habit of thinking of culture as an independent activity is ingrained. We have bound

ourselves to the notion that freedom *from* work is the necessary condition for exercising artistic talent. We forget that the specialisation of intellectual work is a comparatively recent phenomenon, that for long the artist and the craftsman were indistinguishable, that with the rush to power of machine-industry and the minute subdivision of factory processes, each branch of activity is carried on in isolation from the other, the philosopher from the laboratory, the scientist from the studio, the writer from the financier, and all the privileged away from the vital and continuous creation going on in factory, mine and farm, which alone provides leisure for the fortunate. But it is not the possession of ample leisure that creates a flourishing culture : it is participation in the life of society. And the impossibility of such participation in the capitalist world to-day, the pathos of life lived helplessly in intervals between one crisis and the next, the impotent anger at the cynical cruelty and atrocious violence that has become almost the normal condition of things,—all this is reflected in the confusion and frustration, the intenser subjectivism, the fundamental pettiness, for all its desperately cultivated technical excellences, of so much literary work at present. If this work tends to be coloured either by cynicism or with pessimism and mysticism, that is only very natural.

“The steam-roller of history is smashing down the monuments of the past and is advancing on the poet who stands bravely still on guard at the gates of beauty. There is no hope left in him ; he knows the inevitability of his defeat ; he feels he is lonely. Fate alone can save his familiar world. But he lags not for a moment in his endeavour ; he does not cease to sing. Perhaps, his songs.

do not exhilarate ; perhaps his voice is harsh with grief and chagrin ; perhaps he sings at the top of his voice to hide his fear. But his voice alone transcends the bitter clamour of the deluge. We owe him our homage ; he is about to be eclipsed, but we owe him our homage."

This dirge on poetry is taken from a remarkable essay by one who has been among the leading young poets of Bengal, Sudhindra Nath Datta. One notes in it a kind of pathetic pride, a yearning to shield poetry from the lowly impact of the forces of history, a fatal dichotomy between life and letters. No wonder was the world getting too much for this poet, who has for sometime now just ceased to write.

To such a pass, indeed, does the demand for the detachment of the artist inevitably lead. If you assert that the values of art are higher than those of society, and if in your view any constructive attitude towards the changing of the environment of society amounts to a betrayal of the artistic conscience, you will be driven continually towards introspection, the springs of creativity will be frozen, the spirit that giveth life will evaporate. Is it any wonder, then, that writers in recent years, driven to a quandary, have looked for a firm foothold in the past, in Catholicism particularly, and have in varying degrees shared Hopkins' thirst for fertility—"O thou lord of life, send my roots rain !" Is it any wonder that modern poetry has been fragmentary, uncertain of itself, and much of modern fiction subtle essays in minute psycho-analysis, which represent life as a skein of infinitely interwoven sensations and motives and emotions which are as elusive as the colour of mist at sunrise ? On the mind of the reader they leave an impression of ineradicable

complexity in life's facets and suggest that irrationality, if anything, is the key to understanding. This is an attitude which cuts across the great tradition of literature. As a wellknown writer once emphasised, "Who says literature, says communion. What we have to know is, with whom literature communicates." And decadent modern writing—'decadent' being a word of definition, not abuse, and connoting even some special merits—unashamedly contemplates communication with only a small and select minority who are supposed to maintain "the standards that order the finer living of an age." But the awkward fact remains that this minority has no voice and can have none in the ordering of our diseased, acquisitive society. And if by some chance this minority alone, like the Christian monks who salvaged part of ancient culture on the collapse of Rome, manages to hold on to modern culture after humanity has weathered to-day's world-storm, will not our modern culture die of anaemia in the feeble hands of those whose virtue is fine living and horror of all vulgar contact? And for what purpose will humanity have gone through war's purgatory, if art and literature continue to be the jealous monopoly of only a few?

The fact is, as Caudwell points out, that poets have suffered from the illusion of free will, "the bourgeois illusion." They have sought freedom by pitting their individual wills against society and have necessarily failed, for real freedom can only be won by co-operation with society. The apparent freedom of the artist and the intellectual is in fact subservience to the dominant interests which require that attention should be diverted from the real content of the life of our time, which is

social struggle, the attainment and maintenance of freedom peace and progress. This accounts for the fact that much of recent art provide a pleasurable feeling of being highly advanced and yet by inducing a vague, pessimistic helplessness effectively short-circuit any impulse to action.

For how long, to come down to brass tacks, for how long shall we be able to enjoy art for its own sake without worrying about politics and economics? And if only the few elect are the guardians of our culture, will not they be bludgeoned into uneasy submission to the forces of evil as has happened under fascism to the world's best educated nation? How long can the writer revel in a revised form of the old romantic bohemianism, how long can he retain his hot-house "freedom" which is another name for selfishness and social irresponsibility? How much longer will he take to realise that the saving of his art is in the People, with whose consciousness he must re-establish his kinship?

Perhaps the writer has come to regard the mass of the people as either incapable or uninterested, but while surely there is a cruel degeneration of quality inseparable from capitalist mass-production of art as of other things, the socialist application of the same method leaves no room for misgivings. Literature and art under the Soviets, on all reputable evidence, has passed through vicissitudes no doubt, but illustrates also how revolution gives men the possibility of dignity and also of turning that dignity into the common possession. As Paul Nizan said to the Writers' Congress at Paris in 1936: "If it was slavery that permitted Plato and the pupils of his Academy to think, the machines can permit—as they do already in the U. S. S. R.—this dignity to every man. In historic

humanism there are men who live and men who think. One day these two must be one."

The writer, then, must ally himself with progress, and the soundest way of doing that is to go over to socialism. It is not so easy ; it will involve him in work other than imaginative writing, in efforts to evolve a new style. Work may even so absorb him that writing will have to be stopped—haven't writers in recent years sacrificed life itself in the people's cause ? Why, then, must he leave his present ways and go over to something which at first sight has little to do with his passion ?

He must be told, frankly and without offence, that if he does not go over, his writing will become increasingly false to the reality of our troubled time, and therefore impermanent. He will fall back on the past, on dreams, on the sheer magic of verbal juxtaposition : his subtle observation may be uncanny and faithful, but will not tell the truth about life ; the brilliance of his manner will reflect the lovely but anaemic colours of a dying civilisation but will not suggest the gestations of the coming renaissance. He will be lonely and frustrated—"I've been born, and once is enough"—or he will seek uneasy shelter behind the monuments of an irrelevant past. He must, indeed, realise that to be part of the people's destiny is, for artists as for all, the supreme adventure of our time.

As Ilya Ehrenburg once said, "A truly disinterested art is only possible in the new society." For in the classless society of the future it will not be necessary for the writer to give his time and energy to political struggle and he will be able to devote himself to his job without fear that by so doing he cuts himself adrift from the fundamental forces of his day. And surely, if the writer

takes the trouble of thinking, he will be irked to see that in Ehrenburg's words again, "Bourgeois society establishes a hierarchy of hours. The writer pounces on an exceptional instant of life, without connection with the rest." He will realise that bourgeois writing makes, in the name of complexity, an arbitrary simplification, that the recent uneasy trends have been a drift away from the tradition that the artist sees life steadily and sees it whole.

Progressive criticism calls the writer back to his historic vocation, which in his modern malady he repudiates. Mankind is to-day at a stage when culture either moves towards the form of social organisation which is going to take the place of capitalism, now static, reactionary and repressive, or else resigns itself to dying by inches but as beautifully as it can. The guardians of culture to-day are the people, who are moving, deviously, over fields mined and barbed-wired by the enemy, towards the new society.

Meanwhile, the people proclaim that they are the heirs apparent to all that is best in traditional culture. The Soviets have furnished the answer to those who flourish the grim fear of standardisation before the innocent. Do not even academic critics make a virtue of the popular appeal of great art, a fact proved and emphasised by the vogue of the classics in the Soviet Union? And it is good to remember that in saying that the art which the masses love should be encouraged, Lenin added: "There is no question but that in this matter it is absolutely necessary to secure great scope for personal initiative and individual tendencies, scope for thought and fantasy, scope for form and content."

Progressive criticism, therefore, does not glibly ask for hallelujahs to "the dirt and the dross, the dust and the

scum of the earth," does not prefer photographic naturalism, which can tell the truth about life only in exceptional circumstances, in revolutions and often also in wars ; does not cherish the illusion that a new culture springs full-bodied into existence at the word of command. Progressive criticism realises that the richer and deeper the emotional life, the more slowly it changes its nature, and even so, this is largely an intangible change generated in the very process of living. Writers must help, of course, in inducting the new society, but we live in a fool's paradise if we expect great new writing before revolution comes and transmutes our life. We shall be naive indeed if we forget that writing has a past, that the writer has a special sensibility and special inhibitions, that it takes time for events to touch him deep down in his consciousness, deeply enough to stir his creativity. We have none but ourselves to thank if Britain's "political poets" turn obscurantist, and some of our own progressives cease writing or go back to the bad old past. Let us admit that our approach to the writer has often been wrong, and that instead of asking the writer to tom-tom the revolution, our people had better get on with the revolution as fast as they can. Let us build the new reality before we expect the writer to steal a march on it.*

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CITIES AND SLUMS

In September, 1666, there was a Great Fire in London which raged for five days and burnt up half the straggling city. History books call it "a terrible disaster." That usually cheerful diarist, Samuel Pepys, described it as "a most horrid, malicious, bloody flame, not like the fine flame of an ordinary fire", which made him "weep to see it." The cup of London's misery was, indeed, full, for only a year before, the Great Plague had killed off a hundred thousand citizens. But the Fire, which was apparently an unmitigated disaster, was one of the finest things that ever happened to London. It was a huge accidental slum clearance. The huddled streets of the old city, with their filth and disease, were swept away quicker than all the parliaments ever elected could have done. It was a pity that Charles II and the Duke of York tried to stop the good work by blowing up houses with gunpowder, for as a

result the slums of Whitechapel and Stepney to the east of the Tower, were not destroyed ; and the horrible housing conditions there remained unaltered for centuries. The Great Fire gave, indeed, a magnificent opportunity for the rebuilding of London, of which, unfortunately, very little advantage was taken.

Those who know something about the slums of London and other British cities may well recall the Great Fire when they read of the present bombing, which has been going on for weeks. Death and destruction rain from the air, and no doubt the Londoner, as is only natural, cannot help being aggrieved. But, indeed, out of evil cometh good, and it is well to visualise that when this spurt of barbarism spends itself out and the new social order emerges, these cities would be rebuilt as they ought to be, no matter whatever the cost. For every city in the farflung empire of capitalism shelters in its body a gangrene—the slums—which must be rooted out.

There are miles of houses in London, now let as tenements to numerous families, which were meant originally for a single family, usually with a basement kitchen that is commonly the only room provided with a cooking range. The slum-dweller is almost an outcast, and a greater gulf separates the conditions of the comfortable middle classes—not to speak of the 'upper' classes—and the slum-dweller than those which separated the Saxon serf from the earl. The closely-packed back-to-back houses represent the first unregulated exploits of the jerry-builder, for whom men were a secondary consideration to dividends.

INFERNOS

London slums, however, cannot compete with the infernos of Glasgow, Liverpool, Leeds and the Five Pottery

Towns. They were products of the time when the Industrial Revolution and the mad scramble for profits changed the map of England. Swiftly, but haphazardly, sleepy country towns grew into modern Birmingham and Manchester, and the speculative builder descended on them, took over the dilapidated and insanitary cottages and erected the cheapest and ugliest barracks in order to house hordes of workers. Manchester's population grew from 94,000 in 1801 to 237,000 in 1831 ; it is to-day 766,233. This frightening stream of human life has managed to squeeze itself into horrible little brick-boxes that have grown filthier and less habitable as slum was superimposed on slum in each and every year of the past century. In the year 1854, the court-houses of Liverpool were condemned as unfit for human habitation and further building of them was prohibited ; but they are still inhabited, and thousands of people live in the filthy, rotting, tumble-down houses which are almost as bad, and even in the damp, rat-haunted cellar houses in which there is no light. In the Report of the Scottish Board of Health Commissioners on Glasgow housing for 1926, there occurs the following passage which needs no comment :—

“The majority of the houses were dark, many of the tenants having to burn gas all day, winter and summer. Large numbers of tenements were built in the middle of hollow squares, hard up against high buildings on all sides, with no proper ventilation or light. Damp was present everywhere, the walls and ceilings in a large number of houses being literally soaking. Everywhere we noticed an almost total lack sanitation, conveniences being few and for the most part out of repair, and in some cases leaking down the stairs

and even into the houses. Dilapidation is rife throughout the areas. Ceilings are falling down, woodwork is rotting away, there are holes in the walls of houses through which the street can be seen. The houses are a hunting ground for vermin of every description."

Decent men and women, whose only crime is their poverty, must, it appears, continue to live in their stinking homes, killing bugs, running out into the road for water, waiting their turn to use the one primitive lavatory that serves a row of houses, patching their disgusting rat-holes with paper that flaps off after a rainy week. No wonder, indeed, that in a poor district in Glasgow, for instance, the death-rate is approximately twice what it is where poverty is less. The death-rate for the city of Liverpool is 14·3 per thousand; in one slum area it is 22·5 per thousand. The infant mortality rate is 100·2 per thousand births in Liverpool; and in one of the worst districts it is 158·9 per thousand. All the slum-cities tell, indeed, the same tale.

TOLL OF MISERY

Mr. H. V. Morton, who wrote several years ago an illuminating series of articles on "*Slums*" in the "*Daily Herald*", said in regard to landlordism's toll on misery: "*I would rather sit down to table with murderers and thieves than with the people who wring their money from misery. In a perfect state of society they would be stripped to the waist and whipped squealing through their own localities.*"

Those in this country who do not shut their eyes and ears will say the same thing of people who fatten on the misery of their fellowmen. For, workers in India live, as a rule, in abominable conditions which no sophistry,

no jugglery in arguments, can explain away. The Bombay *Chawls*—blocks of flats erected for the accommodation of large numbers of families—are a case in point. The rooms, especially those in the middle and on the ground floors of these tall, gaunt, ugly fortresses, are denied both sunshine and air. The stench from the lavatories, which are always inadequate and often crude, mingle with the stink of the household rubbish thrown into the *gullies* and give quite a nauseous foretaste of hell. Quoting from the report of a lady doctor, appointed by the Government of Bombay some years ago to investigate the conditions of women workers in the city Mr. Shiva Rao once said :

“In one room on the second floor of a *Chawl*, measuring 15 ft. by 12 ft., I found six families living. Six separate ovens on the floor proved this statement. On enquiry, I ascertained that the actual number of adults and children living in this room was thirty. Bamboos hung from the ceiling over which at night clothes and sacking were flung, to partition each family allotment. Three out of six women were shortly expecting to be delivered. All the three said they would have the deliveries in Bombay. When I questioned the nurse who accompanied me as to how she would arrange for privacy in this room, I was shown a small space, 4 feet by 3 feet, which was usually screened off for the purpose. This was one of the many such rooms I saw.” (*Industrial Worker in India*, pp 103-7).

BOMBAY—MADRAS—CAWNPORE

The Bombay Labour Office reported in 1921-22 that 97 per cent. of the working classes lived in one-room tenements with six to nine persons in a room. The Whitley Report pointed out in 1929 that 70 per cent. of

the tenements in Bombay City were one-roomed. And in these one-room tenements infant mortality in 1926 was as high as 377 per thousand births—a record against which the slumdom in Liverpool pales into insignificance ! In the two-room tenements, the infant mortality was 254 per 1000, and in hospitals, mercifully, 107. The figures certainly speak for themselves.

An inquiry, conducted by the Bombay Labour Office, found that nearly three-fourths of the working class families lived in one-room tenements. In Karachi, the Whitley Commission found nearly one-third of the entire population crowded at the rate of six to nine persons in a room, and a room in this context is really a euphemism.

Fully one-third of the population of Madras City lives in *Cheries*—huts made of mud and thatch, low hovels without any aperture for light or air except a small doorway. Not very long ago, the Sanitary Welfare League drew up a report on these slums, in which it appears, for instance, that in 35 *cheries*, housing about 15,000 people, no municipal water supply whatever was available. Of the remaining 146, only 12 were adequately provided with water-taps. A third of the population, in short, obtained less than a twentieth of the Corporation's water supply. There is little or no conservancy, so that the streets are foul and unfit to walk in (Shiva Rao, *Op. cit.*). In the slums owned by private individuals and trusts, there is no street cleaning, and little or no lighting.

The *ahatas* of Cawnpore, the most important centre of industry in Northern India, are mostly unfit for human habitation. Those built by the employers are a little less intolerable, but the profiteering slum-owner is usually content to pocket his handsome return (15 to 25 per cent.

being a common rate) from his foul property and shut his eyes to the fact, among others, that infant mortality in the working class areas often exceed 400 per 1000 births.

HOWRAH AND CALCUTTA

To come nearer home is to see no pleasanter spectacle. Can anything equal, for squalor and filth and stench, the *bustees* in Howrah and the suburbs to the north of Calcutta ? A certain number of "lines" are built by the mill-owners, they are bad enough—a single room with a mockery of a verandah in front for cooking and washing—but they are miles better than the private *bustees*. These are filthy and dangerous hovels, with neither light nor water-supply and, of course, no sanitary arrangements. To get to these groups of *bustees*, one has to walk along a narrow tunnel of filth where breed myriads of mosquitoes and flies, the ready carriers of foul diseases.

Howrah is the second biggest municipality in Bengal, but its slums are as dark a disgrace as can be imagined. In a small room in a Howrah *bustee*, facing the usual and open drain, Mr. Shiva Rao found nine people living; in the next, which was hardly bigger than eight feet by six feet, were eleven people and two goats on the tiny mud-floored verandah. Howrah is, indeed, excruciating, infinitely more than is Calcutta, where one in every twelve premises is a *bustee*, and where one can still see "palace, byre, hovel—poverty and pride—side by side".

But does anybody really worry ? One wonders. At least, the people of importance—the people with a stake in the country—do not worry. They do, of course, occasionally mouth philanthropic phrases. They can hardly do

otherwise, for they are chiefly, if often unconsciously, responsible for this miserable state of affairs. To pretend, however, that this can be tackled by such ridiculous trifling as charity from these very people is cruel and philistine folly. Even the irreducible minimum of human wants cannot be satisfactorily supplied till there is a drastic overhaul of society and its institutions.

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A PEEP INTO BENGAL'S HISTORY

Indigo Riots of 1859-60

Bourgeois historians are past masters in the art of suppressing, or at best, explaining away facts that do not square with their pet ideas about historical development. The classical instance of this subtle, and in many cases unconscious, mendacity is the way in which they have conspired to draw a veil over that tremendous event in history, the Paris Commune of 1871. Everything in the past that has a revolutionary significance for the present is usually screened away from our sight for, isn't class-war a crude and terrible concept, and aren't social conflicts mere accidents? We in particular, have been fed on whatever history our masters have thought good for our souls. Our people have been passive, our masses inert, and submission the badge of all our tribe—so we have been told time and again, the conclusion irresistibly being that our masses are incapable of initiative and that

it is better and wiser to trust to the good offices of our masters, if we care for our country's progress and well-being.

It is not surprising, therefore, to see that to most of us it will be news that in 1855 the Sontals in Western Bengal had risen in revolt against the rapacity of money-lenders and of their protectors, the police and the military forces of the State, that they had been in complete control of a large tract of land, and were only broken by the most terrible and vindictive repression. And though many of us have heard of the infamous indigo factories and the acts of tyranny perpetrated there, we do not know the scope and importance of the Indigo Riots of 1859-60, when Bengal's working peasants showed determination, class solidarity and powers of organisation in a manner which cannot fail to infuse hope and confidence in those who are, even in these eventful days, still sceptical of the revolutionary potentialities of our masses.

The system of indigo manufacture in the province of Bengal had become, in the first half of the 19th century, an important feature of its economy, but it had been unsound from a very early period. Acts of violence which occasioned deaths, illegal detention of people, especially in stocks, with a view to the recovery of balances alleged to be due from them, rioting and unlawful infliction of punishment, were some of the charges conclusively proved against the European planters as early as 1830, and the situation was so serious that the government had to withdraw the licenses granted to four of the more notorious planters. The largest and most important area of indigo production was in Lower Bengal. Most of the product came from the holdings of peasants who contracted, too

often under duress, to grow it on the lands they held from the Zamindar. In the plantations themselves, the work was done by hired labour, but it was not half so profitable, because the peasants who worked for the planter on their own holdings were bound by contract—the terms of which they were not often in a position to understand—to sell the indigo plant to the factories at a price which was even below the actual cost of production. In the fifties of the last century, moreover, the planters began to acquire Zamindaris, Taluks, etc., with the result that in indigo matters the ryot had no protection when the same person was both indigo manufacturer and Zemindar.

THE PEASANT'S PLIGHT

According to an estimate in 1850 by Sir John Peter Grant, then Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, the peasant lost Rs. 7/- per bigha of land for cultivating indigo instead of rice. This in itself should sufficiently account for the peasants' reluctance to cultivate indigo. On top of this, however, the planter, never adjusted his accounts with the ryot from year to year, with the result that the ryot, who had received some money in advance from the planter, never knew how much of his debt had been paid off by the labour of the past year. A writer in a reactionary Anglo-Indian Journal (*Calcutta Review*, June 1860, "The Ryot in Bengal") breaks out into classical similes to picture the plight of the peasant: "Like Sisypheus he succeeds in rolling the stone up the hill, only to see it down again. Like Ixion he is chained to a wheel which rolls and rolls and never stops. Like Tantalus he always seems to be within reach of his object, yet he never secures it." A statement, widely believed at the time, that the

planters unlike the Mahajans, charged no interest, was in reality a calculated lie, for they advanced money to the ryots at a high rate of interest and the latter unlike their masters had no Insolvency Court to afford relief ! It was the rule, moreover, that when a father died in debt to the factory to the extent of 80 or 90 Rupees, the planter was entitled not only to whatever property the father left, but also to the *services* of the son ! Debt thus accumulated from father to son, from son to grandson, till the cup of endurance was full. It was more or less "a state of slavery" as was admitted later on by speakers in the British Parliament (Hansard, Vol. 158, col. 1277).

An article in *Calcutta Review* (June, 1860), which concludes with a tribute to the planters as a class and the usual nonsense about the responsibility of Christian gentlemen towards the natives, and is presumably unprejudiced in favour of the ryots, quotes an ex-planter's description of the peasant's distress :

"The Ryot gets a nominal advance of two Rupees per Bigah. I say, nominal, because after he has made the usual present to the Amlah, etc., there is very little of the 2 Rupees left, but say, he gets his 2 Rupees, at the end of a good season his account per Bigah would stand so :

A Bigah of the very best plant, 20	
bundles at 5 bundles for the Rupee	Rs. 4 0 0
Deduct expense incurred by the	
Ryot, in cultivating that same bigah	
Stamp Paper	... 0 2 0
Seed	... 0 10 0
Five Ploughs	... 0 10 0
Sowing charges	... 0 3 0
Weeding charges	... 0 6 0

Cutting charges	... 0 4 0
Rent of land	... 1 0 0
	<hr/>
	3 3 0
Balance in favour of the Ryot	0 13 0

It must not, however, be supposed for a moment that the Ryot receives thirteen annas ! Having been paid four Rupees for his plant, the Amlahs are entitled to two annas on each Rupee, which reduces his profit to five annas, and from this he has still to fee the Ameen, Kalashee, etc."

A SPECIAL LAW

The law which, euphemistically enough in capitalist society, professes to be no respecter of persons, gave the planter as a matter of course the right to enforce his contract in a Civil Court. The planters, however, demanded in addition the right of criminal prosecution in such cases, and though refused in 1811, secured this special law in their favour in 1830. This iniquitous law was again repealed in 1835, but in March 1860, in response to the persistent agitation of the planters, "the Legislative Council in Calcutta hastily enacted a law whereby any man guilty of breach of contract was declared punishable as for a criminal offence—a law quite unparalleled in its nature, especially since it was to be put in force by the magistrates upon the mere deposition of a planter." (Hansard, Vol. 158, Col. 1263 *et ff.*). Serious disturbances had preceded the enactment and more was to follow; appointment of an Indigo Commission could not by itself appease the growing anger of the sorely tried peasants. The danger foretold by some Christian Missionaries as

early as 1856 was now a reality, and a contemporary observer noted in surprise :

“The ryot, whom we were accustomed to class with the enduring helot or the Russian serf, whom we regarded as part and parcel of the land upon which he lived, the unresisting instrument of Zamindars and planters, has at length been roused to action and has resolved to wear his chains no longer.” (*Calcutta Review*, June 1860).

HOW IT WORKED

Many of the agreements piously pleaded by the planters were forgeries. The Indigo Commission found, for example, two ryots imprisoned under the law ; who were both stone blind and therefore could not have been cultivators. At one time and in one jail in Nadia there were no less than 588 persons who were criminally convicted under an Act which made a common default a criminal offence. One man was made to pay Rs. 217 when he had only had an advance of Rs. 6/- ; another who had an advance of Rs. 2/- was ordered to pay Rs. 161/-. On April 12, 1860, Mr. Layard mentioned in the House of Commons “a contract by which an unhappy ryot bound himself and his sons never to pay back his advance in money or in any other way than by continuing to cultivate indigo. The date of this agreement was so recent as on the 29th of November 1859. It was a forged document.” Sir Charles Wood, Secretary of State for India, was constrained to admit “that only last year one of these unfortunate ryots was moved from place to place and had never been heard of since.”

INDIGO STAINED WITH BLOOD

●The planters enjoyed what virtually amounted to immunity from the law. Their oppression can be visualised in

Mr. Layard's words : "The planters occupied the land of the unhappy man ; armed men entered upon his property, destroyed his house, cut down his trees, rooted up his garden, murdered those who attempted resistance and seized others, carrying them off and confining them in prisons, built by themselves ; *a state of reckless lawlessness prevailing, which was never equalled in any civilised country of the world.*" (Hansard, Vol. 162, cols. 802-12). The planters recognised "neither the existence of magistrates on earth nor that of a God in heaven" ; "not a single chest of indigo reached England without being stained with human blood"—these are statements of a well-known Sessions Judge, Mr. de la Tour, who averred, besides, that "he had seen ryots speared through the body and others who had been shot down at the instigation of the planters." Ashley Eden, who was later Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, admitted that "a feeling of terrorism" was being perpetuated by the planters, for "without it, the cultivation of indigo could not go on for a day." He added that "prosecutions were scarcely ever attempted, partly because mofussil magistrates knew the difficulty of procuring a conviction in the Supreme Court (which alone could try the planter), partly from great unwillingness among prosecutors and witnesses to subject themselves to the liability of going to Calcutta to attend the Court, and partly owing to the bias in favour of the planters which had been too frequently displayed by men of all positions." (*Ibid.*). In the autumn of 1859, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal was informed of a certain case in which a planter had attacked a village, arrested its inhabitants and flogged them all himself. An Indian magistrate who could have jurisdiction only over his fellowcountrymen, punished

the planter's agents and ordered that the damage done to the sacked village be paid. His verdict was reversed by a European magistrate. "This was not a question," said the Marquis of Clanricade in Parliament, "of peasants refusing to fulfil a contract and an outrage committed upon them in consequence. An individual who had been subjected to ill-treatment was not forthcoming on the trial ; the reason was that the poor creature was dead." (*Ibid.*, Vol. 158, cols. 1263, *et ff.*) When leading Indian residents of Calcutta tried to send legal assistance to the hard-pressed ryots, "the magistrate at least in one district, taking advantage of a clause in the Act which made any one aiding or abetting its violation liable to a fine or six months' imprisonment, condemned a legal adviser to imprisonment and fine. One Mooktiar or lawyer was sentenced by Mr. Betts for the offence which was no offence at all, to six months' imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 200/- the Act being alternative, and in default of payment to a further imprisonment of six months." (*Ibid.*, vol. 162, cols 802 *ff.*) A deputy magistrate named Abdul Lateef was unnomiously removed from his post in Nadia, because he had tried to uphold the law against the planters. Ashley Eden himself narrowly escaped a similar disgrace. The alliance between the Government and the planters to maintain "order" was working well. The class character of law and justice was never more clearly revealed.

PEASANTS RETALIATE

Early in 1860, the peasants of Lower Bengal, Hindus and Muslims together, rose against the monstrous class-tyranny under which they had been groaning so long, and

Nadia, Abdul Lateef's district, gave the lead. They set fire to factories and seed-godowns, village after village repudiated the payment of rent and seized the lands which the planter used to cultivate with hired labour. A spokesman of the planters in Parliament reported that the very existence of Europeans was at stake, and the ryots were threatening to withhold payment both to the Government and the landlords. The planters engaged mercenaries to fight for them, mostly discharged soldiers and sailors from Calcutta. The Government sent troops and gunboats to terrorise the countryside. *All the forces of the Government were mobilised against the desperate peasants, the justice of whose claims none could deny.* The state was acting, true to its principles, as the executive committee of the capitalist class.

In the autumn of 1860, things looked pretty critical. "I assure you," wrote Lord Canning to the Secretary of State, "that for about a week it caused me more anxiety than I have had since the days of Delhi. ... I felt that a shot fired in anger or fear by one foolish planter might put every factory in Lower Bengal in flames." The rebellion, however, was not a mere unorganised jacquerie, and those who doubt the revolutionary capabilities of our peasantry may well note the impression of fear which "*their organisation and capacity for combined and simultaneous action,*" produced in the mind of Sir J. P. Grant, then Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. Passing through Nadia, Jessore and south Pabna, for some 30 or 40 miles down the rivers Kumar and Kaliganga, he found on both banks, as on two sides of a street, tens of thousands of men, women and children, asking for justice. He added significantly that there was an organisation about them

which led him to apprehend that *if justice were not granted, it would be taken.*

The revolt was crushed by the Government and the capitalists working together. The peasantry in one part alone of the country could not hold out indefinitely. *But they dealt a death-blow to the system of indigo cultivation in Bengal*, and by braving tyranny and death have left for us a splendid revolutionary record—"a heap of treasure," to quote Ruskin's words in another context, "which neither moth nor rust can corrupt, and even our traitorship, if we are to become traitors to it, cannot sully."

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INDIA—THE PIVOT OF EMPIRE

BEFORE he became Viceroy of India, Lord Curzon wrote in 1898 : "India is the pivot of our empire ... If we lose India the sun of our empire will have set." Four years earlier, in his "Problems of the Far East," panegyrising England's wealth and power, he wrote ecstatically : "There, in the heart of the old Asian continent, she sits upon the throne that has always ruled the East. Her sceptre is outstretched over land and sea. 'God-like,' she 'grasps the triple fork, and king-like, wears the crown'."

For more than two hundred years, the powers of Europe have fought for the mastery over India and so for world supremacy. The ceaseless quest for the route to India and therefore for domination over it, was not

due only to an overdose of the spirit of adventure in certain individuals, but the rivalry, acuter as the economic orientation of politics became clearer, of Britain with Spain and Portugal, with Holland, with France, with Russia and with Germany. It is common knowledge that capitalist economy in Britain has been built up, stage by stage, on the exploitation of India. The industrial Revolution could not be utilised without the primary accumulation of capital, and in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the treasure that India was compelled to disgorge was to Britain the biggest windfall that ever happened. In the nineteenth century, India was Britain's principal source of raw materials and market for machine manufactures. In the twentieth century, British capital has poured into India, drawn by the lure of cheap labour, of unremitting toil to be exacted with impunity from the dumb, driven cattle that we are expected to be. This close economic connection between the two countries has had important reactions not only on the structure of economy in Britain, but also on its social and political organisation.

This economic and financial significance of India to Britain is weakening now, but is still very considerable. The old monopoly of the Indian market has of course gone, irrevocably. These are not the halcyon days of the nineteenth century when four-fifths of our imports came from Britain. Even as late as the eve of the last World War, two-thirds of Indian imports were from the same source. India, for the last dozen years or so, has ceased to be the largest single market for British goods, and in 1938 fell even to third place. It would be mythical, however, to hold that India is, under the fostering care of imperialism and with the aid of British capital, being transformed into

a modern industrialised country. India is still the pivot of empire, and the policy of keeping our country as an "agricultural hinterland," in a position of "planned backwardness" has by no means ceased.

The lion's share of Indian trade is still in British hands—nearly one-third of our imports and over one-third of our exports. In 1933, the Associated Chambers of Commerce in India estimated British capital holdings at 1000 million pounds, fully one-quarter of the total of British capital investments overseas. The annual tribute drawn from India to Britain, in one form or another, was estimated by Shah and Khambata in "The Wealth and Taxable Capacity of India," at 150 million pounds. This calculation was based on the year 1921-22, and is more than the total of the entire Indian budget of that year.

The oligarchy in Britain consolidated its position in the second half of the seventeenth century by its favourite device of the Public Debt. In India, too, the nucleus of British capital investments was the Public Debt. The East India Company, on a modest computation, had withdrawn over 150 million pounds in tribute from India, apart from charges for the cost of wars waged, not in India's interest, outside India—in Afghanistan, China and other countries. Yet when in 1858, the British Government took over the Company's administration, they took over also a debt of 70 million pounds, to be paid back, of course with goodly interest, by the people of this country. In eighteen years of beneficent government, the debt doubled itself. By 1900, it had reached 224 million pounds; by 1913, 274 million; by 1936, 719 million. The origin of this debt is to be found in the costs of wars and other

charges debited to India and later in the costs of the most outrageously expensive railway and public works schemes (with profits guaranteed to the British investor). Fantastic additions were made to its amount, as when part of the expenses of the Mediterranean fleet, the maintenance of diplomatic and consular establishments in China and Persia, the costs of a war on Abyssinia and even of a reception to the Sultan of Turkey in London, were debited to the Indian taxpayer.

The dominant feature of Indian economic history in the 20th century has been the finance-capitalist exploitation. The war of 1914-18 and its sequel saw a big decline in the British share of the Indian market. Despite tariffs and imperial preference, Japanese, American and German competition grew serious. And in spite of heavy obstacles, Indian industrial production, principally in light industry, was making progress. Between 1913 and 1931-32 the United Kingdom's share of Indian imports fell from 63 to 35 per cent. In spite of Ottawa, which forced up the proportion to 40 per cent in 1934-35, it sank again to 38.8 per cent in 1935-36 and to 38.5 the next year. But while the old basis of exploitation was weakening, the new basis of profits by finance-capitalist methods was on the up-grade. In 1933, as the British Associated Chambers of Commerce computed, the total of British capital investments in India was a thousand million pounds, fully one quarter of the estimated total of British foreign investments all over the world, while in 1911, according to the calculation of Sir George Paish, British capital investments in India formed 11 per cent of the world total. This advance from one-ninth to one-quarter, from 11 per cent to 25 per cent., in about twenty years' time, is an indi-

cation of the importance of British finance-capital operating in India to-day. No wonder the constitution of 1935 put such special emphasis on "safe-guarding" British financial interests in our country.

Till 1914, imperialism opposed industrial development in India, openly and unashamedly. Till 1924, the indignity of the cotton excise duty on Indian manufacture as a sop to Manchester, had to be swallowed by our cotton industry. The war meant, of course, a certain amount of compulsory industrialisation, and the Government tried to put a brave face on it by appointing an Industrial Commission and releasing some tall talk on a "forward policy in industrial development." But the elaborate schemes for an imperial department of industries came virtually to nothing. As Sir M. Visvesvaraya lamented, the much-vaunted Central Bureau of Industrial Intelligence and Research devoted its attention mainly to sericulture and handloom weaving ; heavy industries, "the greatest need of the day," were left severely alone ; and "long-range proposals, if they have any, for the economic development of the country are kept undefined and shrouded in mystery." (*Planned Economy for India*, 1936, p. 247). When in 1927 the iron and steel protective system came up for renewal, the basic duties were lowered, the subsidies were abolished, and most notable of all, favoured rates for the entry of British manufactured goods were introduced. No wonder the Tariff Board has been the *bete noir* of Indian economists and patriots.

The merest tyro in economics must know that the development of the metallurgical industries means the real industrial revolution. And it is here that our pathetic weakness stands out. The real picture of modern India

is indeed one of "de-industrialisation"—that is, the decline of the old handicraft industry without the compensating advance of modern industry. The census returns show that the numbers dependent on industry actually fell between 1911 and 1931, while those dependent on our primitive and heart-rending agriculture increased. The former fell from 11.2 per cent in 1911 to 10.49 per cent in 1921 and to 10.38 per cent in 1931. And a foreign writer, D. H. Buchanan, could very well say: "In spite of her factories and her low standard of living, India is less nearly self-sufficient in manufactured products than she was a century ago." (*Development of Capitalist Enterprise in India*, 1934, p. 451.)

Indian capital has made some advance no doubt, but British capital remains in effective domination in banking, commerce, exchange and insurance, in shipping and the railways, in tea, coffee and rubber plantations, and even in jute, where the larger amount of Indian capital is yet under British control. The managing-agency system has been a potent instrument for maintaining this control of Indian industrial development. And besides, there is what has been aptly called "the Menace of (India), Ltd."—foreign capital exploiting directly the cheap labour power of our unhappy country and merrily digesting the profits.

They talk abracadabra who speak of our heightened opportunities for industrial development. Who in Calcutta does not remember the pathetic farce of the city corporation entrusting a much-boasted *mistr* with piecing together a motor car? The contraption was launched in Calcutta's perilous streets, and to the relief of all but its occupants—if there were any—it well and truly collapsed. The scene

was a fitting commentary on our impotence—a theme that has lately been underlined by our industrial magnates like Walchand Hirachand who wail so often with pathetic persistence about State discouragement of whatever is vital in Indian industry.

The role of India yesterday and to-day remains the same. We are hewers of wood and drawers of water. Our country is the pivot of the world's greatest empire.

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SLAVERY—AND ITS MODERN FORMS

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“THOU hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye ; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.”

Rome, the capital of Christendom, and all her accomplices in the attempted rape of Abyssinia, need this admonition to-day. What right has Italy or any other Power to impeach Abyssinia before the bar of humanity, on the ground that slavery is still extant in that ancient empire ? It is nothing but sanctimonious vulgarity on the part of Italy to talk about presenting to the League of Nations a demand for the expulsion of Abyssinia which, the indictment runs, is beyond the pale of civilisation ? The Ethiopian empire is certainly no paradise for the worker ; slavery is a damnable institution, and inspite of recent

efforts to stamp it out in that country, it still persists. But why choose to forget that of the five or six million slaves in the world to-day, not more than some two millions are in Abyssinia? There are hundreds of thousands of them in Arabia, in the British Protectorate—Shades of Wilberforce!—of Sierra Leone, in China and elsewhere? How explain away the fact that there are types of forced labour in the colonies of “civilised” Powers—Italy certainly not excepted—ranging from outright chattel slavery to the border-line between forced labour and wage labour? In nearly all colonial and semi-colonial countries, there are laws, regulations and practices which compel the majority of the native population to work for a definite time, directly or indirectly, for foreign capitalists without pay or for only a nominal wage. Peasants are robbed of their means of livelihood, their lands taken away, their homes often burnt, that they may turn into wage labourers; thrown on to a strange world, they are compelled by the pangs of hunger to accept work to which they are unaccustomed, wherever and however offered. Peonage, convict labour, imported contract labour, are but variations on an old and accursed theme, slavery. Humanitarians in the League of Nations do, of course, raise their voice against chattel slavery, but they do little more than betray that imperialism needs more concealed forms of forced labour as a more efficient means of capitalist exploitation, that the rising tide of colonial revolt must somehow be successfully placated. It is significant that the Maharaja of Nepal, taught by “advanced” Powers to see that wage labour can be more effectively exploited than slave labour, said in a speech in 1924: “The slave must be fed and clothed whether he

works ill or well, he must be nursed in illness, and at death or desertion, his value will have to be written off as a loss. The slave will require more constant supervision than the free labourer, because, sure of a bellyful whether he works or not, he will naturally prefer to do the least possible ; you cannot starve him, because his physical weakness will be your loss. The superiority of free labour to slave labour is not a matter of mere speculation." [Kathleen Simon : "Slavery", p. 128.]

In the Italian colonies, fascism rules with all the ruthlessness to which labour is subjected in Italy. By means of bayonets and machine guns, the population of Somaliland, where Italians are a tiny one thousand among 9,00,000, is forced to work for their dictators. In 1930, a whole tribe was removed from one section of the country to a new region, in order to isolate them from neighbouring tribes whom they were suspected of contaminating with ideas of revolt against the Italian military regime. To solve the unemployment problem, the Government is annexing tribal lands and giving them over to Italian colonists. The infamous policy of Italy towards Abyssinia shows her colonial craft to a fault.

France is perhaps the most profoundly civilised country on earth. But its imperialism—the republic, paradoxically, is proud of its colonial empire, the second largest in the world—is vicious, and its treatment of African subjects sometimes dastardly. By means of expropriation, French companies secure "concessions" for the development of cocoa, rubber, cotton, etc., and compulsory labour provides them with cheap human material. Workers assigned to plantations are organised in squads and sent into forests to collect rubber, manico and other produce. Failure to do their allotted task in a specified time means flogging and

sometimes even death, for the lives of Africans are entirely in the hands of European overseers who are, more often than not, brutal beyond belief. It is no uncommon sight, as the great French writer Andre Gide testifies, to see thousands of natives toiling incredible hours in the most devitalising tropical weather, watched over by armed guards often swishing their whips made of animal hide. The Congo-Atlantic railroad has meant great loss of life among conscript labour, men and women who were wrenched away from their primitive homes under the stern aegis of the tricolor flag of liberty. The Trans-Sahara Railway, when completed, will have cost much more in human lives than all the pyramids of the Pharaohs.

Belgium, as is notorious, has surpassed other imperialist countries in sheer, nauseating brutality to the native population. That great Englishman, E. D. Morel, ruthlessly tore down the clever veil of "humanitarianism" which king Leopold had put on his Congo policy. But even to-day the tremendous output of copper in the Katanga mines—the largest in the world—is the work of an unhappy army of natives who, like their brethren all over Belgian Africa, are recruited through force. The Belgian mandate over what was formerly part of German East Africa has meant hell for the inhabitants who suffer not only from nature's visitations but from the infamous punitive measures of the Government.

Portuguese imperialists were among the first slave traders in Africa; they are still the vilest oppressors of Negroes. Prof. E. A. Ross, an outstanding American sociologist, describes the method of their officers in robbing the workers. "A labourer works for the coffee planter, and at the close of his term of service the planter says, 'I

can't pay you anything for I have deposited the stipulated wage for you with the Government ; go to such and such an office and you will get your pay,' The worker applies there, and is told to come around in a couple of months. If he has the temerity to do so, he is threatened with the calabose' (prison) and that ends it. It is all a system of barefaced labour stealing. They think that the planter has really paid for their labour, but that the official does them out of it." Their labour agents are nothing but slave raiders. After the slaves have been collected in gangs in Angola, they are chained around the neck and marched for hundreds of miles from the interior to the coast, where they are auctioned off to the plantation owners, after which they are packed together on the filthiest ships and taken away to St. Thome and Principe. Within a period of ten years, over 80,000 'natives' have been thus exported. The march from the hinterland to the coast is one of incredible misery and cruelty. The well-known British publicist, H.W. Nevinson wrote on investigation ; "The path is strewn with dead men's bones. You see the white thigh-bones lying in front of your feet, and at one side, amongst the undergrowth, you will find the skull. These are the skeletons of slaves who have been unable to keep up with the march, and so were murdered or left to die." Labour conditions under Spanish imperialism are but little better. [For details, see George Padmore. "The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers," London, 1931.]

The Union of South Africa provides a good example of "civilised" land theft. Some 5½ million natives are herded into reservations consisting of some 60 million acres of the worst land, while the 1½ million Europeans occupy 240 million acres of the best land. One of the most "civilised"

methods used by imperialists in breaking up the agricultural system of the natives and converting the peasants into forced labourers, is to impose heavy taxes on them. There are many varieties of such taxes : harvest tax ; a poll tax to be often paid in "kind," i.e., by forced labour ; hut tax ; taxes which have to be paid in lieu of forced labour, and others. The natives are thus ruined and have to apply to large capitalist plantations, factories or mines for work to secure money with which to pay taxes. Forced labour also takes the form of arrest and sentence to hard work of persons who do not satisfy vagrancy and pass laws that are often beyond the comprehension of the natives. In Kenya colony, laws compel "vagrants" and juveniles without parental support, into practical slavery.

The statue of Liberty is among the first impressive landmarks to greet the visitor to New York ; the United States is supposed to be the land of freedom. But perhaps every visitor does not forget the Black Belt of the southern States where lynching, peonage, Jim-Crowism, political disfranchisement and social ostracism are widespread. Perhaps he does not forget that in every one of the colonies, semi-colonies and "independent" countries where American capital is invested, Wall Street imperialism is using forced labour either directly or indirectly. Herbert Hoover, sometime president of the U. S. A., was for many years a director of the Kaipang mines in China, where he found out that it was cheaper to pay 30 Mexican dollars for hiring "an occasional Chinaman" than to timber the mines. In 1904, the Chinese Engineering and Mining Company under Hoover's management, accepted a contract for recruiting and shipping Chinese coolies to work in South African mines. The Company undertook to ship

200,000 of these contract labourers who were allured by fraudulent advertisement. Out of the very first lot of 2,000—the vessel carrying them was allowed by regulation to carry only 1000—51 died or jumped overboard. In Bolivian tin mines, owned by U. S. citizens, we find semi-slave conditions among the Indians who are forcibly transported in hordes from their villages. The semi-feudal Government of Venezuela supported by war-ships from Washington in the interests of the Mellon oil concessions, likewise employ forced labour.

Cuban sugar-companies easily circumvent the law with the fiction of a contract made with illiterate Negroes from Haiti, Jamaica and other places, who do not understand the language of the country where they are brought, and are kept, as all impartial observers testify, in semi-military barracks, guarded by troops and denied every civil liberty. American bankers, coffee, sugar and fruit barons do the same in Haiti. In the “independent” republics of Central America, dominated by U. S. imperialism, forced labour is used in varying forms and under various names, peonage being the most typical and widespread.

In Liberia, on the west coast of Africa, founded in 1822 to serve as a “haven” for Negro freedom, U. S. imperialism benefits by actual chattel slavery—the buying and selling of human beings as property. The Firestone Rubber Company’s “concession” of one million acres of rubber land is an infamous preserve. On Jan. 23, 1932, the “New York Times” reported that, according to reports from humanitarian organisations, Liberians who had testified truly before the League of Nations Commission had been visited by severe reprisals ; their homes were burnt, even

whole villages destroyed. In Hawaii and in the Philippines, we hear the same sad tale. [On this topic, see W. Wilson, "Forced Labour in the United States."]

There is no escaping the overwhelming force of these very depressing facts. They could be multiplied ; horror could be piled on horror. So long as our economic life is organised on the principles that are unhappily dominant to-day, labour is bound to be exploited. But perhaps we are not often conscious that the exploitation in our "civilised" age takes forms that are, on any ethical standard, damnable. We must never allow ourselves to forget that civilised nations fulminating against malpractices in Abyssinia, for instance, are assigning to themselves a role of moral superiority to which they are not entitled. Let us by all means condemn the many flagrant abuses that are to be found in Abyssinia ; but it does not lie in the mouth of Italy or any other Imperial power to utter the condemnation. They should do better to take to heart the words of their Lord : "He that is without a sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."

THE DEMAND FOR COLONIES

AN ominous indication that an imperialist war is in the air, is furnished by the fact that since the autumn of 1935 there have been persistent talks about a partial re-distribution of colonial possessions. There are people, even, paradoxically, in our own country, who are blind, consciously or unconsciously, to the real implications of imperialism, who divide rival imperialist powers into the "haves" and "have-nots", and who offer the latter their sympathy and support. Proposals are being put forward for an "equitable redistribution" of colonies, of mandates and of supplies of raw materials. The claims, arrogantly adumbrated, of Hitler and Mussolini and General Araki, are backed by the gentler voices of "progressive" ecclesiastics like the Archbishop of York and of Christian

pacifists like Mr. Lansbury. Germany, Italy and Japan, the leading "have-nots", freely express their "need" for expansion and their determination, at any cost, to achieve it. So Germany openly and feverishly piles up armaments, Italy despoils Abyssinia, while the Powers look on, and Japan relentlessly pursues her war offensive in the Far East, and their tanks and bombing planes and bellicose speeches produce in so many Christian and pacifist breasts the passion for "justice"! Mr. Lansbury and official Labour spokesmen to-day call for a world conference to discuss redistribution of raw materials and for the placing of colonies under an international mandate; the left wing Labour leader, Sir Stafford Cripps, calls for "the pooling of Colonial resources"—all because they want "justice" and "equity" in international relations!

What, forsooth, is this "justice"? The answer is that it requires only the re-arranging of the booty of years, it wishes to minimise the scramble over the spoils. It implies that the peoples living in colonial territories are dumb cattle to be shepherded into whichever pounds their masters specify. It implies that the subjection of the colonial peoples to their imperialist exploiters is a natural dispensation of Providence and that the subject peoples are chattel slaves to be bandied about at their owners' will. What an amount of well-intentioned pacifist sympathy goes to the heavily armed imperialist powers, deprived so cruelly of their "fair" share of the spoils! The poor "have-not" Powers are smarting under an injury and must be placated; "native" populations, so conveniently "backward," need not, of course, be consulted. As an able publicist puts it, one is reminded of the child who, on being shown a picture of the "the Christians thrown to

the lions," was full of sympathy for "the lion who had not got a Christian."

It is no doubt, a fact that the partitioning of much of the world's surface amongst the imperial states has resulted in an uneven distribution of power—a reflection of the law of the inequality of capitalist development. It is a fact that, roughly, there are some Powers who are "satisfied" and some who are not. But the theory of the "Haves" and "Have-nots" is dangerous and misleading; it raises illusions of a peaceful solution of imperialist antagonisms by some form of redistribution of colonies or internationalisation of access to raw materials, it serves as a plausible excuse for the murderous drive, so obvious in Fascist countries, to war and its sequel, barbarism, it is based on the vicious assumption of the necessity and permanence of the subjection of the colonial peoples, and finds the "injustice" and the cause of all mischief in the fact that some Powers do not possess a sufficiency of colonies and not in the colonial system itself.

II

It is often argued that Germany, Japan and Italy need colonies in order to find room for their surplus populations. One finds it a trifle amusing that Fascists and militarists will in one speech deplore the falling birth rate and urge energetic measures for accelerating the growth of the population, and will, in another, refer to the increase of population as the irrefutable argument for colonies as an outlet for the "peoples without space." The case for the acquisition of colonies on this ground is, anyway, quite untenable. Most of the colonies, over which the contest is fiercest, are already thickly populated, or not suitable for

settlement by the inhabitants of the colonising states. Japan has possessed Korea for forty years and the number Japanese settlers there in all that time has been less than the annual increase of Japan's population. Whatever Japan does in regard to Manchuria in ten years' time, there would not, according to the noted economist Sir Arthur Salter, be as many Japanese in Manchuria as the increase of Japanese population every six months. The German colonies never had as many German settlers as there were Germans in Paris before the war (17,000). Italy, after forty years' colonisation of Eritrea, has got to-day less than a hundred persons engaged there in agriculture, while whatever happens in Abyssinia, it could never accommodate more than a small proportion of Italy's surplus population. As Sir Arthur Salter said at the National Peace Council Conference on "Peace and the Colonial Problem :—" If Italy planted settlers in Abyssinia as fast as she could for ten years, she would not have dealt with the increase in the population of Italy of two months. If you take central tropical Africa, all the Europeans in all the colonies established in the course of more than a quarter of a century, they do not amount to as much as the increase of the Italian population in a year." Since 1880 Europe's population has increased by 173 millions, and the net emigration to territories controlled by Europe has only been about 500,000. Those who talk of the pressure of population as an excuse for an expansionist policy are blind, unwittingly perhaps, to its real character.

It is too often ignored in academic discussions that except in relation to the social and economic conditions in a given country, there can be no problem of surplus

population. Every country under capitalism has a surplus population ; that is, more people than are properly fed, housed and given a chance of work and normal development. Britain, for all her "empire", has a surplus population of millions, the unemployed and their dependants. Czarist Russia had a huge surplus population which would, in shoals, emigrate every year. But the Soviet Union has an annual increase in population of $3\frac{1}{2}$ millions and yet confidently anticipates being able to provide for several hundred millions more, because of its socialist economic system. The Soviet Republic of the Ukraine which is the present goal of the Nazi expansion eastwards has a greater density of population than Germany itself. How the colonisation of the Ukraine will help to solve Germany's population problem is a mystery.

When the apologists of the "have nots" base their claims on population figures, they make themselves absurd. If the drive to expansion was naturally and inevitably caused by "over-population" in the sense of extreme density of population to the arable area and primitive standard of living, then India, China and Java would lead the race. If all the present talk about the surplus population problems was really well informed and honest, one would not have noticed that the arguments, such as they are, are always used in favour of the Powers that can make their voices heard and threaten to change by main force the existing distribution of colonies, and never in favour of the small countries which are left to fend for themselves, though their lack of resources is very much more acute. It is so easy and plausible for Might to masquerade as Right, and that simple and "godly" men like Mr. Lansbury are taken in, is not much of a surprise.

III

The theory of colonial policy which is most widely held today is that colonies are necessary for the supply of raw materials. In a speech on March 22, 1936, Mussolini declared: "Italy will not resign herself to the abused commonplace that she is poor in raw materials"; and Goebbels said on January 17, 1936: "We are a poor nation. We have no colonies, no raw materials. But we must tell the other nations that the time will come when we must demand our colonies back. It is dangerous for the world not to concede such demands, because some day the bomb will explode."

The Royal Institute of International Affairs has recently issued a brochure on "Raw Materials and Colonies". The figures therein show that the United States of America is pre-eminent in the production of raw materials, and the British Empire—Great Britain, the Colonies, the Dominions and India being taken as a unit though the Dominions are, of course, self-governing—comes next. The Soviet Union takes the third place and is followed by France and the Netherlands with their colonial Empires. Germany, Japan and Italy are not big producers of raw materials, along, of course, with scores of other states that cannot afford to create a furore in the international stage. Germany is the world's chief producer of potash, but otherwise she counts for little as a producer of raw materials.

From the figures, however, it appears that the "basic materials"—coal, iron, cotton, oil and copper—are produced very largely in sovereign states and an interchange of colonies, in the unlikely event of agreement among the possessing powers, will not be of much help. That the

British Empire is practically "self-sufficient" is chiefly due to the production in the Dominions and in India, and the renunciation of India and the Dominions by British imperialism is not conceivable. Rubber is the only really important raw material which is virtually a colonial monopoly, British Malay, the Netherlands, East Indies and Ceylon accounting for 96 per cent of the world's production. Another colonial quasi-monopoly is tin, 57 per cent of world's produce coming from British Malay and the Netherlands East Indies. The Soviet Union is the leading producer of flax, hemp, timber, manganese, magnesite and chrome ore, and is second as a producer of petroleum. Canada has the virtual monopoly of the world's nickel; China leads in the production of soya beans, a position probably usurped by Japan since the emergence of Manchukuo; Chile is the chief producer of copper; South Africa provides half the world's gold, Australia leads in wool and is second in lead; India has the monopoly of jute; Spain is first in mercury and olive oil; Mexico leads in silver and has large resources of lead and petroleum; the United States of America leads in ever so many items. It appears, thus, that very much of the production of raw materials is in independent states or in countries like India which imperialist Britain will certainly never agree to give away to any other Power. Besides, the clamour of the expansionists points usually towards Africa, while rubber and tin, the two most important raw materials produced very largely in the colonies, are not available anywhere in Africa. The only other "basic material" produced in considerable amounts in the colonies is copper, Northern Rhodesia and the Belgian Congo accounting for 21 per cent of the world's produce.

The Mandated territories which figure so largely in discussions on colonial readjustment are by no means very rich in resources, except for a few cases like the potash desposits in Palestine, and have but little significance in the world supply of raw materials.

It is ridiculous, therefore, for the Nazis to claim as they do that "it is largely due to the loss of her colonies that Germany is so adversely affected by her present position in respect of foreign exchange and raw materials". It is impossible to see how the return of the colonies to Germany will materially contribute towards the restoration of her economic prosperity. This will be clear when we look into the pre-war trade figures of Germany, which show that in 1911, according to the "Economist", the imports of raw materials (excluding food-stuffs) into Germany from her colonies was of the value of £2'1 millions, while her total imports of raw materials (excluding food-stuffs) amounted to £270 millions. In 1913 sisal hemp was the only commodity imported into Germany from her colonies! What, then, is the earthly good of making such a noise about the necessity, shown here to be unfounded, of returning the colonies to Germany to help her solve the problem of raw materials? Neither Germany nor Japan nor Italy can or will be satisfied with a few straggling colonies which a conference of the Powers—so dear to the hearts of liberal enthusiasts for "justice" to the "have-nots"—may offer them. All the present talk about the return of the colonies is the rumbling before the storm; diplomatic discussions are the prolegomena to imperialist war.

IV

There are many who realise that the economic arguments for colonial redistribution are completely fallacious, but are persuaded that there are 'psychological' arguments of great importance. To ignore them is, in the simile of the "Manchester Guardian", "to adopt the attitude of those who refuse to believe a neurasthenic suffers because he has no bodily complaints.' The official organ of the British Labour Party, the "Daily Herald" tells us that the colonial problem is primarily one "of prestige, of status."

Surely, psychological factors are of great account and must not be ignored. But why is it that just Germany and Italy and Japan are confronting the world with their arguments for a re-mapping of the world? Why are not the small states (who lack, more than Germany does, the primary commodities) leading the movement for revision of treaties and territorial arrangements, instead of being, as they are at present, the most faithful upholders of collective security and the sanctity of treaties in the capitalist world? Why is it that the expansionist Powers are only the aggressive fascist states which feel strong enough to demand and fancy their chances of securing a "place in the sun"? Certainly not simply because of their economic difficulties which, it is clear, would not be solved at all by any amount of re-mapping of the globe. Their attitude is due to the fact that their ruling classes feel they have power—strategic, economic and military. Prestige, they know, is a function of power, and their policies are fashioned accordingly.

The leaders of finance-capital are concerned very much more about solid, tangible gains than about "psycholo-

gical" satisfactions, and there is no doubt about the solid advantage of a colonial empire. If a comparison is made between British and American exports in 1930 (the figures are in the "Economist", Nov 25, 1933), it appears that British exports predominated in India, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, Egypt, Malay, Nigeria and the three Scandinavian countries, while American exports predominated in France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Holland, Spain, China, Japan, Brazil, Chile, Argentina and the Soviet Union. British priority had been ousted in every leading country of the world, except the Empire countries, and Denmark, Norway and Sweden which are closely linked to Britain. A further fact emerges that British predominance remained strongest and American exports could not reach 20 per cent of the British, in four countries only : India, Egypt, Nigeria, Malay, representing the colonial system proper. That the dominance of the sovereign power in the colonies does not depend solely on tariffs and preference is clear from Leonard Barnes' brochure on "The Future of Colonies". It is very interesting to study some of his tables which refer to colonies still largely governed by the "Open Door" principle .

NIGERIA 1933.

	Imports from. per cent.	Exports to per cent.
United Kingdom.	67	37
Germany.	8	16
Italy.	3	4

BELGIAN CONGO 1932.

	Imports from, per cent.	Exports to, per cent.
Belgium.	46	76
United Kingdom.	11	·09
Germany.	7	1·6
Italy.	·8	·1

FRENCH WEST AFRICA 1930

	Imports from, per cent.
France.	47·3
United Kingdom.	15·8
Germany.	7·6

Barnes concludes from his survey : "Effective equality is evidently not established by mere absence of tariff discrimination. The fact is, of course, that the scales are loaded in favour of the suzerain both in colonies and mandated territories, even when the 'Open Door' principle is in operation". The solution of the colonial problem offered by the British Labour Party—"equality of opportunity to all nations in the undeveloped regions of the earth"—will be thus of little effect. Sovereignty alone, whether masked as mandate or not, is the decisive factor for securing economic advantages in a colony.

The colonial system in the age of imperialism is a complex of many factors, the colonies serving as a market for the export of goods and of capital, a source of raw materials and a source of super-profits realised through the exploitation of colonial labour, and being kept together by the armed domination of the imperial power. A whole host

of regulations goad the colonial peoples to labour, on starvation wages, for the foreign master ; evictions, hut taxes, poll taxes etc. are samples of the method of domination. When, therefore, Sir Samuel Hoare explains, on behalf of British imperialism, that raw materials are sold without discrimination to all who can pay the price or when Sir Arthur Salter points out that every customer has to pay the same price, the "have-not" Powers are convinced of nothing but the hypocrisy of the apologists of imperialism. Raw materials can be bought at the price offered by the monopolist power, not at the price paid to the colonial producers, the workers of "backward" countries. When the International Rubber Regulation Committee fixes its prices, due regard is paid to the dominant British-Dutch interests.

The fight among rival imperialist powers can only be a fight for *domination* and for *monopoly*. So British imperialism sent its agents to the four corners of the globe, prospecting for oil, that it may flout the oil monopoly of America. So Britain partitioned the Turkish empire in the hunt for Oil, created the new state of Iraq, lorded it over Persia and incited civil war in Mexico, to establish its rival oil monopoly. Similar was the British attempt to be independent of the American monopoly of raw cotton—organising the Empire Cotton Association since 1902, and developing with huge subsidies and vast construction works like the Assouan Dam and the Sind Barrage, the growth of cotton in the Soudan, in India, in Kenya, in Uganda, in Iraq. Similar was the reply of American imperialism to the virtual British monopoly of rubber, when millions were spent by the U. S. A. to develop the growth of rubber in the South American States it

controls. In such conditions as these, assurances about equality of opportunity will not help. Monopoly has to be backed up by colonial or semi-colonial forms of imperialist control. As the "have-not" Powers lack that control they are not satisfied with statements about the "Open Door" and "no discrimination" in regard to prices.

V

There is no doubt about the predominance of the "satisfied" imperialist powers ; but while to the peoples of the colonial countries it is a cruel process, to the rising imperialist rivals of those powers—the "have-nots" of to-day—this is an unpleasant situation which they want to change. But the remedies so often suggested to placate the latter—conferences, "pooling of colonial resources" etc.—are worse than useless. When even the suggestion that the Mandates Commission of the League of Nations should have the right to send observers to see the mandated areas on its behalf is stoutly resisted by the Mandatory Powers, it is easy to realise what the reactions of the "Haves" would be to proposals for any genuine sharing of the colonial spoils. In minor cases, especially where a smaller colonial Power is concerned, proposals "for bartering the colonial peoples in the cattle-market of the Great Powers" are not impossible. Before the war of 1914 Britain had attempted to buy off the German challenge with a magnanimous offer of the African Colonies of Portugal which is to all intents and purposes its vassal. A similar attempt was made in 1935 to pacify Italy with the cession of Jubaland. The Portuguese colonies may figure in a similar dirty deal in the near future ; it is significant that Mr. Lloyd George in a recent speech, severely castigated by the Swiss newspaper "The

Neue Zuericher Zeitung", referred to the "unfairness" of little countries like Portugal and Holland having colonies while Germany had none. But any concessions that may conceivably be offered to the "have-nots" must inevitably be minute in proportion to the main spoils; conflict may be postponed for a while—Hitler, significantly, offers a twentyfive years' truce in return for colonial concessions—but the challenging Powers will only have their appetites whetted, no solution of the fundamental antagonisms will be the result.

The only attitude towards the question of the colonies that is consistent with a real fight for peace is that of support for the movement for national independence of the colonial peoples and for the struggle to overthrow and not to perpetuate in another cloak, all imperialist domination. That way alone lies the hope of the world. When the colonial peoples are roused and shake off the yoke of imperialism, the fight for peace will have been won. Till then, rival imperialist powers will be measuring their strength and preparing for ever renewed conflicts, as imperialist hunger is never appeased. Dr. G. P. Gooch said in a recent lecture at London that "after the conquest of the Sudan in 1898 and of the Boer Republic in 1902 we said, and meant, that we were satiated, in the sense that we had everything we wanted in the world." But in the decade before 1914, British imperialism was busy scheming to permeate Persia and the Middle East, conducting military operations in Somaliland and Tibet, pressing on with the infamous task of despoiling China, preparing ever so astutely for the war against German imperialism—a war managed so well that two million square miles of territory were added to the empire at the

end of it. Insatiability is, indeed, the badge of imperialism.

We in India can never feel any sympathy for the demand for colonial readjustments. Schemes which treat colonial peoples like ourselves as chattel slaves to be transferred at will from one owner to another, we will not touch with a pair of tongs. It is not for us to show sympathy to the "have-not" Powers, whose interests and demands, as much as those of the "haves", are an insult to our humanity. But we ought to oppose the demand for colonies not only on this ground which is important enough, but also because it offers no solution of imperialist conflicts which will cease only when the super-profits of imperialism are taken away by the victory of the freedom movement among colonial peoples.

WHO LEADS INTERNATIONAL REACTION ?

IT is more than time that we in India realised the role that is being played by British imperialism in the arena of world politics. Most of us, one fears, are inclined to think that the "National" Government of Chamberlain & Co., are helpless and innocent victims of fascist diplomacy, that they are weak and blind and even cowardly, and that the fascist dictators are hoaxing and hoodwinking them with impunity. Between British imperialism and ourselves there, surely, is no love lost, and we rejoice, very pardonably, when we hear of humiliations meekly swallowed by its agents in the Far East, in the Mediterranean and in Central Europe. We fondly imagine that the Empire of His Britannic Majesty is in inexorable decline, that gone for ever are the days of Palmerston who

thundered over Europe when a disreputable Portuguese, Jew, whose only redeeming feature was British citizenship, was arrested in Greece, that Britain's extremity is our opportunity. It is true, indeed, that the British lion has ceased to roar, if only for the time being, and it is good that we have realised that the imperial power of Britain is not immutable, and compromise with it is not our only practicable national aspiration.

There is no doubt, of course, that the political orientation of the fascist States is a menace, if only an ultimate menace, to the British Empire. Rival imperialisms, besides, do not exactly coo to each other as doves of peace, and that explains the tremendous rearmament programme that Britain has undertaken. There is ever-present danger of war so long as the contradictions of rival imperialist interests continue, and axes and alliances notwithstanding, feverish piling up of armaments and diabolical experiments in every refinement of mass torture are bound to go on. But it would be folly for us to forget that the imperialist government of Great Britain represent, in reality, the interests of those who are bombing Chinese and Spanish civilians, that Mr. Chamberlain decidedly prefers paying Danegeld to fascists rather than run the risk of democratic revolutions, that the "National" Government is the spear-head of international reaction.

TENDENCY OF BRITISH POLICY

It is necessary to recount some recent history in order to understand the tendency of British policy. The process which began with enforcing a reversal of the Blum Cabinet's decision to send arms to Spain and compelling Blum to appear as the sponsor of the British policy of "non-

intervention" to which he was opposed, has since been carried to even more extreme lengths. British policy has powerfully assisted the reactionary financial interests in France to sabotage the economic programme of the People's Front and has paralysed any independent French foreign policy. In Britain a recent inquiry by the Ministry of Labour has shown that between 1924 and 1935, the average weekly hours have lengthened from 46 to 47·8, and true to its role of the redoubtable servant of Capital, the British Government fought the forty-hour week at Geneva and is determined to smash the forty-hour week won by the Popular Front in France. Anglo-German and Italian co-operation plans have been going on for a considerable time now, and Britain evidently is determined to maintain the subserviency of the French Government and to bring about a new combination which would abandon the Franco-Soviet pact. Whatever the particular differences with the fascist powers which compel fluctuations in the day-to-day policy, the Four-Power Pact in Western Europe remains the aim of the "National" Government, and Central Eastern Europe is to be left to themselves and the mercy of the marauders of fascism.

It is significant to note that as early as October 5, last year, President Roosevelt had issued a call for a "concerted effort" by "the peace-loving nations" and for the "quarantine" of the aggressor States. This was especially notable in view of the offensive of Wall Street, the centre of American finance-capital, against Roosevelt and the combination of left democrats, farmer, labour and communist forces supporting the President. It was a repetition, more definite and comprehensive, of the opportunity of 1932 which was missed to the cruel detriment of

China's interests ; but this time also it was politely ignored.

At the Annual Conservative Conference, Chamberlain formally welcomed the appeal, but quietly brushed it aside and went out of his way to issue a warning against "premature" attempts at "any particular course of action" and then talked enthusiastically about hopes of an agreement with Mussolini. In spite of all this, however, the Labour Conference at Bournemouth, while formally criticising the government's foreign policy, did in fact support its rearmament programme, irrespective of its foreign policy. While the rank and file may not have intended this outcome, such in reality was the case. The Resolution on India was diplomatically shoved off from the agenda ; the leaders of British labour, as a group, put on the colours of "labour lieutenants of the capitalist class."

CONFUSION OF THE LEFT

The political confusion of the Left in Britain — which is reflected in our country as well — can well be seen from a recital of some of the relevant facts. Before the Bournemouth Conference, the National Government had entered into the Nyon Agreement which marked at any rate a step towards collaboration with France and the Soviet Union against the pirate Powers. At Geneva, Eden united with Delbos to give pledges to Spain that if Italy resisted the demand for the withdrawal of troops, "drastic action" would be taken and the Pyrenees frontier opened. After Bournemouth, however, secure in the lack of Left leadership, the pledges were thrown overboard. British pressure prevented France opening the frontier, and though belligerent rights were not granted to Franco, Britain

exchanged accredited agents with him on November 4. Franco in an exultant communique stated : "It is much more than a recognition of belligerent rights, because the recognition of belligerency is much less important than the recognition of sovereignty implied in the conclusion of this agreement." Hard on its heels followed by the Triple Pact between Germany, Italy and Japan on November 6, Chamberlain's Guildhall speech of welcome to this alliance on November 9, and the decision to send Halifax to Hitler.

British policy is not unaware of the ultimate menace of the Triple Pact to the British Empire as the owner of the richest world spoils. But the British still count on the possibility of a deal with the Fascist Powers, to save its own colonies at the expense of Central and South-Eastern Europe, without having to weaken fascism as the bulwark of reaction. British capitalists would thus have some breathing space, with the British Empire and the fascist Powers dividing peacefully their respective spheres, while Britain completes its armed preparations for the inevitable future imperialist conflict. Everything is being done in the meantime to bring about the maximum unfavourable conditions for the democratic and anti-fascist forces, for fascism after all is blood-brother to imperialism, and democracy, if it is to survive, must overcome capitalism and imperialism.

BIGGEST LIE OF POLITICS

"Non-intervention" in the Spanish struggle is, surely, the biggest lie of contemporary politics, but it has never yet been smashed. The British Labour Party realised its infamy after 14 months, but even now gives the impression that there is no alternative to the policy of the British

Government ! Yet as the year 1938 opened, the grand diplomatic offensive of reaction under British leadership also began. That the People's Front Government in France was defeated under direct British pressure cannot now be denied, in spite of the criminal silence of the majority even of Liberal-Labour journals. Only the "*Manchester Guardian*" and the "*Daily Worker*" reported the feeling in France over this direct diplomatic and financial intervention of British Conservatism to overthrow a Cabinet democratically chosen by French electors. Apart from the French Communist leader, Thorez, the leading independent Conservative publicist, M. Bure, writing in the "*Ordre*", and the non-political financial journal, "*Cote Auxilaire*", made this specific allegation.

Only with this British attack on the Popular Front, there went attempts to enforce a French-Nazi agreement through the mediation of Flandin who is notorious as Britain's man, and the negotiations of the chiefs of the Press Departments of the French and German Foreign Offices. Delbos, in his tour of Central Europe, was compelled to act as Britain's mouthpiece and even to urge on Czechoslovakia as early as January of this year to make terms with Germany, terms which began to bear fruit in the expulsion of the democratic German refugee press from Czechoslovakia. It is not simply because of the hypnotic power of the Nazi military machine or its economic penetration that all Europe from the Rhine to the Soviet frontier is falling under fascist domination ; the decisive factor in the case of nearly every one of the smaller states has been British pressure. This is notable in the case of Poland and Hungary which have always carefully kept in step with British wishes.

Jugoslavia's pact with Italy last year, which practically represented a break with France's Little Entente, and was followed by the visit of its Prime Minister to Berlin this year, was reached in consultation with the British Minister at Belgrade. The moves of the Oslo group (Dutch-Belgian-Scandinavian) are also very significant. Holland, whose interests in the Far East and in oil, are linked with Britain's, has proposed formal repudiation of the League Covenant by recognition of the Italian conquest of Abyssinia ; Sweden, almost a semi-colony of Britain, proposed the dropping of sanctions from the League Covenant as no longer operative, thereby leaving the field open for fascist war-makers ; Belgium provided the notorious Van Zeeland whose plan, in effect the British Plan, envisages in the name of peace the formation of an international economic and financial organisation separate from the League, which will secure fascist co-operation and will supply credits for Fascism in Germany and Italy, and possibly special exploitation rights in the colonies.

A THREAD-BARE DELUSION

On February 17, Halifax stated in the House of Lords that British policy was directed to allow "nothing to impair the smooth working of the Berlin-Rome axis." The conception that the separate negotiations with Italy were intended to weaken the position of Germany is a thread-bare delusion. The successive flirtations with either end of the axis have only served to strengthen the axis as a whole. Chamberlain and his Government can not escape the charge of direct responsibility and complicity in Hitler's 'coup' in Austria. In the "*National Zeitung*" of March 14, Goering explicitly stated that he

had informed Halifax of the plan, and Halifax, when confronted, could only say that his talks with Goering "must remain confidential"! Strange are the ways of "gentlemen", (for isn't Halifax a "great Christian and an English gentleman?") but of course the people have to suffer, and "gentlemen" are not supposed to bother about that. On February 12 Hitler sent his first ultimatum to Austria, accepted on February 15 with the appointment of Seyss-Inquart, in view of the indifference of Britain and France. Between February 15 and March 11, the Austrian State, which Britain and France had repeatedly promised to maintain in its integrity, was in its death agony.

But on February 20, Chamberlain got rid of Eden, on the same day that Hitler had attacked him, and installed Halifax, Hitler's protege, as Foreign Secretary. On March 2, Chamberlain blandly informed the House of Commons that the St. Germain Treaty, proclaiming the "inalienable independence" of Austria was not violated by Hitler's military ultimatum. On March 3, Anglo-German negotiations began in Berlin. On March 7, Chamberlain declared in Parliament that the League could offer no protection to the small States against invasion. These were, indeed, successive "All Clear" signals to Hitler. On March 9, Ribbentrop came to London and saw Chamberlain and Halifax more than once. On March 11, the 'coup d'etat' took place. The French ambassador in London, seeking to interview the Foreign Minister and to send a joint note to Berlin, was kept waiting till the "coup" had taken place. On March 14, Chamberlain, of course, repeated that he had not given prior assent or encouragement to the Nazi invasion of Austria. But the facts tell a different

story. When, of course, Social Democratic Germany wanted union with Austria, they were duly snubbed by the protagonists of the inviolable sanctity of international treaties.

BRITAIN'S AMAZING ROLE

All the world is awaiting to-day the outcome of the tense situation in Central Europe. Against the frontiers of Czechoslovakia, as well as, most significantly, of France, Nazis are concentrating their forces. Henlein's visit to London and interviews not only with Cabinet ministers but also City merchants, and Opposition politicians, are very notable. The check to Hitler on May 24 by the successful demonstration of collective security on the part of France, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, saved peace in Europe for the time being. But Britain talks about "conciliation", and sends a notorious pro-Nazi, Lord Runciman, to bring about a settlement, and Runciman begins his task provocatively by treating Henlein and Kundt and the other Sudeten Nazis as if they represented sovereign states. Chamberlain makes a show of building up the Anglo-French front to meet the menace of Hitler and Mussolini who on their part pour execrations on the so-called democratic Powers. But it would be inexcusably superficial to be misled by this situation.

Chamberlain has a long-range policy : he wants the Four-Power Western European Pact ; to reach this objective, it is necessary to manoeuvre, to conciliate France, so long at least as the Popular Front is unbroken, with half-promises, while in fact putting pressure on its policy in the interests of fascism ; it is prudent to threaten Hitler and Mussolini with superior armaments, while at the same

time negotiating with them and helping their aims. If he wanted really to build a front against the fascist menace, his first act would inevitably have been to come closer to the Soviet Union. But he never conceals his hostility to the Soviet Union, and the recent Moscow trials have revealed, if anything, that British imperialism has been the driving force in the anti-Soviet crusade not only in Europe, but in Central Asia and the Far East as well. In the meantime, while Runciman encourages the Sudeten disrupters of democratic Czechoslovakia, Duff-Cooper cruises in the Baltic, to Kiel and Danzig, and meets Nazi and Polish war chiefs, and the Nazi and Polish press confidently anticipate British support for their plans. As R. Palme Dutt has put it : "Like spoilt children triumphantly bullying and blackguarding their unhappy, indulgent rich papa, the fascists can simultaneously bully, blackguard and harry the 'demo-plutocracies' and at the same time come round for new supplies, concessions, credits and assistance."

BAREFACED CONNIVANCE

The same story of barefaced connivance on the part of the British "National Government" can be found in the events in the Far East since 1931. In the League of Nations, over the Manchurian issue, Sir John Simon was Japan's best advocate. And since hostilities broke out last year, and China has been showing tremendous powers of resistance as a result of the splendid merging of all the forces of the nation, Britain has been enduring insults and humiliation at the hands of Japan, not so much because of the "traditional friendship" between Japan and Britain, but because she fears the repercussions in the East and

throughout her farflung empire, of a possible victory for the People's Front of China. Let there be no mistake about it. Britain fears, indeed, the growth of Japanese imperialism, but she fears and hates the resurgence of the people of China and of other Eastern countries very much more.

British imperialists are not innocently unaware of the potential menace of Hitler & Co., to their empire. On these matters they do not need the advice of Labour and Trade Union leaders like Dr. Dalton or Sir Walter Citrine. They know full well how they have hoodwinked the Labour spokesmen into supporting their war plans and have persuaded the Trade Unions to refuse even to congratulate the Mexican Government and trade unions on their brave defiance of Anglo-American oil interests. Of course they are still anxious that they may be involved in a war they do not want owing to France's commitments in Eastern Europe. To prevent this, they may still be compelled to manoeuvre, and even to do something to stave off a premature advance of Hitler before the ground is well prepared. But this does not mean that they are moving over to the democratic front of collective peace.

The appearance of ambiguity, vacillation and uncertainty is only dictated by the manoeuvring necessities of a complicated situation. But the real policy is being pushed forward with deadly speed on every front, in relation to Austria, to Central Europe, to Spain, to France, to the Far East and the Soviet union. It is a continuous policy persistently carried on despite occasional deviations, throughout the post-war period, and especially since Hitler came to power.

“THEY SHALL NOT PASS”

A quotation from Hitler's ‘Mein Kampf’ is very revealing in regard to the foreign policy of Britain :

“England does not want Germany as a world Power. France does not want Germany as a Power at all. An important difference. At the present day we are not fighting for the position of a World Power, but for the existence of our country, the unity of our nation and bread for our children. *If we look from this standpoint for allies in Europe, there are only two States, England and Italy.*”

The first five years of Nazi diplomacy bear out this statement. Hitler, whatever his failings, is often very honestly frank, and has given here the key to his foreign policy. Britain and the Fascists can, of course, never continue to be friendly. Rival imperialisms must, sooner or later, come to a clash. But for the time being, they have joined together to defeat the forces of democracy and progress.

The international situation, therefore, throws the gravest responsibility on all who care for freedom and progress. Every socialist, every democrat, every anti-imperialist must unite against the fascist and imperialist war mongers ; they must unite to ensure the victory of the Chinese and Spanish peoples, to defend democracy in Czechoslovakia and the integrity of the Soviet Union. The firmness of the Soviet Union in its recent stand against Japan, the glorious heroism of countless Chinese and Spanish comrades, the strength and tenacity of the people in France and in Czechoslovakia, the growth of the Popular Front movement in different countries, must hearten every one who cares for peace and civilisation. We in India

must proclaim anew our unrelenting opposition to the intrigues of British imperialism ; and to the marauders of fascism our slogan all over the world would be : "No Passaran"—They Shall Not Pass.

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THE TRAGEDY OF EUROPEAN LIBERALISM*

The liberal, like the Bourbon, learns nothing and forgets nothing. This is the thought that comes to one's mind when reading Dr. Benes' latest book, a collection of his lectures on democracy at Chicago University last spring.

Dr. Benes is a remarkable man. With his master the late Thomas Masaryk, he was the symbolic representative of Czecho-Slovakia to the world. He fought and worked for Czech independence. For twenty years he sat, devotedly, at the helm of the Czecho-Slovak ship of state. In October last year, he took his leave of his people, not because he wanted to, but because of three separate ultimatums sent to him by to-day's great champions of

* Democracy To-day and To-morrow By Edward Benes (Macmillan, 7-6)

"democracy"—Chamberlain and Daladier—ultimatums which wanted him to clear out and his liberal-democratic state to be smashed at the behest of Nazi Germany.

Benes was kicked out; free Czecho-Slovakia which had been for years and years his absorption by day and dream by night, was wiped off the map before the ink on the signatures of his "democratic" friend guaranteeing the new "racial" boundaries, was hardly dry. With the blessings of those very persons who have the impudence to-day of posing as the defenders of democracy, British Finance Capital entered into negotiations with its Nazi counterparts for plans of economic co-operation—at Dusseldorf and in the capitals of the miserable little dummy "republics" of South America. Benes went into exile—but it was not so unpleasant, for England and the United States of America were his "spiritual home." And at Chicago, he prated, in very nearly the old manner, on democracy; he had learnt nothing from his experiences and he had forgotten nothing of his prejudices.

For, what were his experiences on the eve of the cynical amputation of Czecho-Slovakia, with a view, no doubt, to a speedy strangulation as well?

Benes himself has been constrained to admit that the only Power that was ready, without reserve, to come to the assistance of his people was the Soviet Union. G. E. R. Gedye, most reputable of international journalists, in his "Fallen Bastions," has given a clear account of the unexceptionable Soviet attitude in this matter. A Czech scholar, Dr. Hubert Ripka, who has been and remains a close political collaborator of Benes, has recently published a highly informative book, "Munich Before and After" (Gollancz, 15/-) and fully corroborates

Gedye's narrative. Throughout the crisis of September-October last year, the Soviets never for a moment left Czecho-Slovakia in doubt that she would fulfil her obligations under the Pact of Mutual Assistance which had been signed on May 16, 1935. The Soviets were even willing to assist stricken Czecho-Slovakia, if France did not ask the Soviets to come to its assistance, because it did not want to make it possible for Germany to declare a "crusade against Bolshevism" for above all, it did not wish to alienate its friends in Britain and France who were much less anti-Nazi than anti-Bolshevik.

Benes preferred the friendship of the Western "democracies" and paid the price for his choice. On March 18, 1939, at the University of Chicago, he made a pathetic appeal to the American people when the remnant of the Czech state was absorbed into Hitler-land with his friends in Britain and France looking on. "Five months ago," he said "during the so-called September crisis, the Czecho-Slovak nation was asked to make sacrifice of territory, and pressure was put upon my people not to fight for their freedom, integrity and independence, in order to save the world from war. The appeal was made to that little people to sacrifice themselves for the peace of the world. That little people did it, and that little people received the promise of the integrity of the remnant of its national territory and of the security of its national state. That little people, having made these sacrifices under pressure of the decisions at Munich, accepted, because the four Great Powers at Munich signed an obligation to guarantee the new state ..." The guarantee, of course, was thrown to the winds, and Benes, true to the liberal tradition, rushed to find the ironic consolation of philosophy: "The man

who in modern history has been taken as a symbol of brute force, Napoleon, has declared : 'There are in the world two powers—the sword and the spirit. The spirit has always vanquished the sword. In this statement I agree with the words of Napoleon.'

He very well may ; he has made his choice, he can only find a refuge in wish-fulfilment.

His lectures on democracy at Chicago are an illustration of this wish-fulfilling tendency. Like the true-begotten liberal, the Man in White, he shows not the slightest rancour towards those friends of his who conspired at Munich to kill the state which had put its pathetic faith in the "democracies" of Western Europe. He is, no doubt, the embodiment of the spirit of non-violence. Not even the rankest treachery towards its own professed principles makes him suspect capitalist "democracy" of the class bias which is bound, inevitably, to drive it into the arms of reaction. He does not accept the conception of the class struggle ; presumably he expects the betrayals and iniquities implicit in the present system to vanish as a result of "a democratic harmonisation between the classes." He pleads, not with the diabolical cunning of our present-day champions of "democracy," but with the pathetic faith of the incorrigible liberal, for "a deeper and more perfect democracy which I will call humanitarian democracy."

Let us wait, then, for the sublime Monday morning when we shall wake to watch with proper solemnity the ushering in of "humanitarian democracy." The snag is, however, that history, "a cruel goddess" may not wait, that believers in "humanitarian democracy"—the liberals and social democrats in every country—may find

themselves ranked behind the loud-voiced upholders of "democracy" today and led, inexorably, to the crassest form of class tyranny.

AN ADDRESS TO STUDENTS

The Student Movement in India has come of age. It has fought its way against considerable odds, so that neither Government nor politicians nor educational authorities can ignore it. That is why I know you do not want to be flattered, to be told, demagogue-fashion, that you are the only hope of the country. Let us not deny the primacy of age. Let us remember, for example, that the genius of Marx who in his early twenties was writing brilliant articles for the *Rheinische Zeitung* was in full flower years later, when he wrote *Capital* and founded the International. Let us not forget either that most of us belong to a class that has no future and yet imposes on us an unwanted legacy of hesitancy, inhibitions and inverted

snobbery. I know, however, that you have refused to be complacent and to immolate yourselves, as bidden by so many of your elders, in academic hermit-cells ; you refuse to be content with merely a detached interest in social, economic and political problems both at home and abroad ; you have made and are making no inconsiderable contribution to the movement for freedom and social justice. Your critics are legion, but surely youth alone can bring freshness and enthusiasm to bear upon its task. To ignore youth, to anathematise its ardour to mould the world nearer the heart's desire is, in Pericles's famous words, to take the spring out of the year

You have never wanted to be aloof from the pressing problems of our national life, but the lack of a social sense is woefully obvious in the methods and ideals of education in our country. Most of our educated people think of themselves as essentially separate from the masses. They are supposed to live more or less beautifully, in "ivory towers" of their own, isolated as far as possible from the lowly life of the people. It is thus difficult for us to visualise the personality of the director of the Institute of Philosophy in the Communist Academy—Paul Yudin—who was a turner in a railway machine-shop and is now a professional philosopher, literary critic and Arctic explorer, Franz Schiller, once an orphan shepherd-boy in the German Volga Republic, and now a professor of literature, is another such type which our *pundits* will find so hard to understand. No wonder, then, that pedagogic authoritarianism will frown upon all exhortations to students to take a deep and continuous interest in national and international problems and to hold themselves in readiness to respond when the time comes.

Education, under capitalism, is the privilege of the few. In the most advanced capitalist countries, education for the masses ends at fourteen, and so is the system insured against inconvenient attack. We, of course, are beneficiaries of 200 years of British rule and four out of every five of us can neither even read nor write. Our people besides, are literally starving ; preventible diseases merrily take their dreadful toll ; floods and famine are annual visitants ; destitution is rampant and has attacked the middle classes as well. Our students find that their financial prospects are a kind of will-o'-the-wisp , the professions offer no prizes, clerical jobs are harder to get, and salaries are miserable. Prosperous persons address them at University Convocations and pompously wish them success in life—a truly ironic wish. Can students be blamed if they probe deeper than their elders and ask for a drastic reconstruction of our economic life ? Surely we want a plan, audaciously conceived and ruthlessly executed, which will do away with our Bronze Age methods of agriculture and will organise gigantic industries producing for use and not for profit ? We want hospitals and schools ; we want civilisation. But we shall not get what we want till the anarchy which is capitalism, which involves our grinding poverty, our vast unemployment, our degradation and our subjection, is overcome by our own efforts. We shall not get what we want till the imperialism that thwarts our national being, that intends to keep our country as long as it possibly can in a state of “planned backwardness” as an “agrarian hinterland”, is overthrown by the organised might of our people.

To say all this is, of course, politics—some would say “subversive” politics. But why not ? If a social order

which has outlived its use, needs to be overturned, why should not students say it? If students in England, our "respectable" political mentor can hold, political opinions of their own and advertise them, why can't we? To a subject people, waking to a consciousness of its degradation, politics naturally is a serious and unavoidable interest, more so than to others. Our self-appointed trustees have criminally neglected our people's interests and no amount of propaganda of the sort one sees in that infamous compilation *England's Work in India* which every Calcutta student is made to read, can explain it away. It would, thus, be no surprise that our attention is drawn so imperatively to what has been happening over one-sixth of the land-surface of the globe, where the working masses have demolished the tyrannous system under which they had suffered long and terribly, and have built a State—their own Soviet State—where human rights are not just patronisingly recognised in theory but boldly translated into practice. The Soviets have achieved the greatest material and intellectual advance in history. This is the unimpeachable testimony of the two leading sociological investigators of the English-speaking world—Sidney and Beatrice Webb, whose monumental work on *Soviet Communism* even the Government in our country has hesitated to ban. The masses of the world have indeed no chance of access to the region of the mind till they have asserted themselves in national life. Their profit-hunting masters, realising this, have refused them the keys to knowledge lest they should rush inevitably to grasp the keys of power. In the Soviet Union, which is the State of workers and peasants, they have achieved what they have got nowhere else. There education, in the full sense of

training for life, is provided as a matter of course, gratuitously and with attendance made compulsory, in every town and village, for every child irrespective of race or sex or colour or creed or nationality. It is notable that the greatest proportionate educational progress has been achieved by the backward races kept by the Tsars in a state of picturesque backwardness. In the Bashkir Republic, for instance, 1·8 per cent of the children attended primary schools before the Revolution, in 1931 the percentage was 71·8 and in that year universal compulsory education was introduced. The Tartar, the Uzbek, the Kazak, the Daghestani have all shared in the wonderful expansion of economic and cultural opportunities. In striking contrast to the policy of "Russification" followed by the Tsarist Government, the Soviets provide education in the vernacular for all its constituent races, great or small, even where, as in some three dozen cases, the vernacular had never before been reduced to writing. In 1935, schools in the Soviet Union taught in more than 30 different languages, in all of which the various state publishing enterprises now issue books. The Soviets to-day hold the world's record in the number of books and periodicals printed every year. Soviet libraries can furnish 70 books for every 100 inhabitants of the Union—which is yet another record. The wonderfully successful "national policy" of the Soviet Union, testified by friend and foe alike, has provided unheard-of facilities for cultural autonomy, for the development of a new culture, national in form and Socialist in content. Socialism has released the untapped reservoirs of national energy which had so long been contemptuously ignored. No wonder that this contrast of two worlds—the Capitalist and the

Socialist—draws us towards Socialism, and no wonder, either, that Imperialism denies our masses the most elementary opportunity for culture and tries to stifle whatever little cultural freedom a few of us can claim, by banning books and periodicals which relate to Socialism and the Soviet Union. When national and racial rivalries are being merrily exploited by the imperialist bandits, when religious dissension is being kept alive by a combination of deluded enthusiasts and cynical self-seekers in our own country to the great detriment of our united national fight against imperialism, it is a relief to turn to the masterly way in which the national question has been handled in the land of victorious Socialism.

The Soviet Union to-day stands as a great bulwark of freedom, peace and progress—the slogans of the international students' movement—and is a haven of hope in a war-torn world. War is indeed a black-out of all culture, a brutal denial of human values. But war, as Socialist analysis has always shown, is inevitable in a world of capitalist antagonisms which the theoreticians of capitalism have tried vainly to explain away. Crisis has been inherent in capitalism which at one time performed a great historical function in doing away with the shackles on production, but has grown more and more obsolete. In the Fascist countries, capitalism took an unashamed predatory form and destroyed systematically all that we understand by culture and refinement. They were encouraged and financed by the Powers that are boasting of their democratic ideals to-day, because it was hoped that they would all join in a crusade against the workers' state, the Soviet Union. Soviet might and Soviet diplomacy have turned the tables on the Powers that are

courting Soviet friendship to-day, not, of course, willingly, but out of sheer constraint. So Britain spends on war more than 12 million pounds *a day*, and cuts down the Treasury grant to the Universities of 2 million pounds a year—a state of things against which British students have vigorously protested with their slogan of “defend the Universities.” Preparation for war, as in Nazi Germany since 1933, and actual war as witnessed to-day mean, indeed, an end to all culture and all democratic progress. You have run anti-illiteracy campaigns and held cultural Conferences, and I am afraid the powers that be have frowned on you. This is because capitalism, in its far-flung empire, has become utterly reactionary ; it cares no longer for the scientific, artistic and educational activities which at one time it used to revere. Capitalism, as a recent writer put it, has no use for culture, while you are fighting for a world of freedom and social justice, a world where war is anathema, where history has reached a brave, new phase.

In the wake of war, reaction has appeared in the vilest colours in our country. We wanted freedom and the rights of democracy for which, they proclaim from the housetops, this war is being fought, and we get instead the Defence of India Act. India can only be defended by her own people—not surely by officially organised Black-outs and pathetic Air Raid precautions. Even a mechanised army, which India has not, is not enough for a country's defence ; politics counts a great deal even in defence, as the example of France so clearly shows. We can only be defended by a people's army of Free India—the India for which you are fighting on the national front, the India which will rid herself of what Gandhiji

has called "the double autocracy that rules the country."

In the context of to-day it is more than ever necessary that all radical forces must unite and forget their minor differences. Students in particular must take good care to maintain intact and develop dynamically the unity that has been forged in their movement. I confess I have noticed lately some signs of serious discord. I have seen so-called councils of action independent of the Students' Federation in certain Calcutta Colleges and confusion in the mind of the average student who feels drawn towards the idea of student organisation. I have heard rumours of faction fights between sections of students trying to get what is rather mysteriously called their party line to be adopted by the Federation. I for one think that the Students' Federation should include people with varying views and that the fight for student rights, for specific students' demands, can be conducted by all together, without all the time protruding our respective political allegiances. But of course our student movement as a whole cannot help being radical and progressive, and that is only as it should be. And further, while I do not want you to be the tools of particular political parties and leaders, I want you and have usually found you to be genuinely radical. I do not mean that all of you would give up your studies to-morrow and take up political work—that is not the point, and that will be folly. But you must consciously prepare yourselves for the tasks you will be called upon to undertake. Some of you will have to be, some of you perhaps already are, whole-time revolutionaries, ready for discomforts ; to pluck a rose, one cannot always prevent a prick, and you cannot fight for

revolution with silk gloves on. All of you, besides, can do something even now to strengthen the front against reaction. Keep intact the student movement which communalism has not yet been able to tarnish. Keep intact the movement which transcends provincial barriers and to give a recent instance, organised in every part of India meetings and demonstrations against the infamous circular of the Madras Government which poisons the relation between teacher and taught and asks teacher in effect to spy upon students. Keep intact the movement which Gandhiji with his futile thoughts on "No class-war" and *Ram-Rajya* naturally finds too militant for the tastes of the self-interested bourgeoisie. Keep intact the movement which cares not for the wrath of the Maurice Gwyers. Keep intact and develop your organisation which must take its place in the struggle against reactions, against imperialism, against the attack on culture.

Political leaders need you and at the same time fear you. Give them a lesson in unity and help India to win an honoured place in the world that is yet to be, the world that will be built by the disinherited of all lands, the new world that will rise out of the ashes of the old.

From the presidential address to the All-India Students' Conference at Nagpur, December 1940.

THE NOVEMBER REVOLUTION

“All power to the Soviets, land to the peasants, bread to the starving, and peace to all men”—this was the memorable slogan with which Lenin and the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia on November 7, 1917. Immediately after the formation of the Soviet government, the Congress of workers’ and peasants’ deputies heard a report from Lenin and passed the famous decree on peace addressed to the governments and peoples of all the belligerent countries. This appeal to the world’s conscience was, of course, rejected by all the imperialist powers. The same night (November 8), the decree on land turned over to the peasantry over 400 million acres of land which had formerly belonged to the landlords, the bourgeoisie, the Tsar’s family, the monas-

teries and the churches. Peasants were unconditionally released from the obligation of paying rents to landlords of any description. All mineral resources, forests and waters become the property of the people. A Council of People's Commissars, with Lenin at its head, was set up to carry on the administration.

In "ten days that shook the world," to quote John Reed's celebrated characterisation, the most far-reaching revolution in human history was ushered into being. It shook the thrones of princes and prelates. It shook the complacency of the bourgeoisie. To their utter chagrin and consternation the lords of humankind saw power, which they knew to be their monopoly, being grasped with resolute courage by those whom they had always called the scum of the earth. The lower orders, whose only function in life was to obey the orders of their superiors, had now come forward to build the new society in their own fashion and to maintain it against all comers. It was to the rulers, an intolerable situation, and so for years and years they tried to throttle the infant Soviet State.

Russia was the focus—as Stalin put it—of all the contradictions of imperialism. "Tsarist Russia was the home of oppression of every kind—capitalist and colonial and militarist—of oppression in its most barbarous form. Here the omnipotence of capital was merged with the despotism of Tsarism, aggressive Russian nationalism with the rule of the Tsarist hangman over non-Russian peoples, the economic exploitation of whole regions of Turkey, Persia and China with the Tsarist military conquest of these regions." (*Foundations of Leninism*, p. 13.) Those who have wondered why revolution broke out in Russia first of all, and not in countries where industry is most

perfected, where the proletariat forms the majority, will see light in Stalin's formulation of Leninism that the front of capital will not necessarily be pierced first in the most advanced country, but that it will be broken where the chain of imperialism is weakest, and where there is a party tried and steeled in work, ready and able to drag victory by the hand.

The revolution was put to the severest tests, but emerged every time with flying colours. The Bolsheviks had turned over a country ruined by the war, with its lopsided industries destroyed, and its always backward agriculture in chaos. They were to have no respite, for when they had freed themselves from war with Germany by the dearly bought peace of Brest-Litovsk, they had to face Intervention and Civil War, when almost every capitalist power invaded their territory and armed and subsidised counter-revolutionary rebels. Socialist determination, however, was of a quality unprecedented in history. In spite of gleeful prophecies of imminent downfall, the Soviets lived on. The Bolsheviks adjured their people that it was not enough only to exist as a beggarly state. So Lenin told them, "War is implacable ; it puts the question with merciless sharpness : either perish or overtake the advanced countries and surpass them also *economically* ; either full steam ahead or perish. This is how history has put the question." So there followed the Soviet's economic offensive, illustrated in the Five Year Plans and the collectivisation of agriculture—an offensive which amazed an incredulous and increasingly restless world, an offensive whose results are seen today in the never-to-be-forgotten resistance of the Soviets to the colossal military machine of Hitler-Europe.

The entire capitalist world has sought, till lately, to cordon off the Soviet Union from the rest of civilisation. With devilish persistence, the ruling classes have tried to keep down the Soviets. Their methods have been intervention, open as well as veiled, propaganda of the vilest sort, and the repeated payment of Danegeld to the Fascists in the shape of recurring appeasement, with a view to bringing about a war of all the world on the Soviet Union. Their plans have been foiled by the growing friendship of the people in every country for the land of the Soviets, and the sheer ability with which Soviet leaders have shaped their military, economic and diplomatic policy.

Today the world hails the Soviet Union as the vanguard of progress. Today it is no longer possible to withhold from the people the knowledge that the Soviets have built not only a mighty state but a new civilisation. For us, in particular, it is wonderful to know of the Soviets' "nationalities policy," which has won a glory that no scoffing can fade ; the Tsarist "prison of the nations" is in the process of becoming the peoples' paradise. For us, in particular, it is wonderful to know that the despised and the disinherited have in them the spirit that moves mountains, the spirit that waits to be kindled in our own country.

The November Revolution has, in the eventful years since 1917, transformed Russia, which had been a "peasant continent" with a partially developed industry into the foremost industrial country in Europe, and the second most powerful country in the world. The contrast with India, which continues to be kept in "planned backwardness," is vivid indeed. It becomes even more vivid when one compares with India any one of the Central Asian

Republics of the Soviet Union, which were twenty years ago far more backward than India today. The pace of development there and its new, socialist quality must be an eye-opener.

Let us take as an example one of these republics—Tajikistan, which lies within a few miles of India. The Tajiks were under the double autocracy of the Tsarist government and of the feudal-theocratic rule of the Emir of Bokhara. Suffering was the badge of their tribe, and even after the Revolution, civil wars continued to be the curse of the land till 1925. It was in that year that Tajikistan became an autonomous republic, and in 1929 it entered the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as an independent federated republic.

In India in 1911, 6 per cent, of the people were reported to have been literate. In Tajikistan, before the Revolution, only one-half of 1 per cent, of the population could read and write. In 1931, the Indian figure of literacy was 8 per cent., while by 1933, 60 per cent. were literate in Tajikistan. There were only a hundred Tajik students at school in 1914 ; the figure in 1939 was 328,000. By 1936, the Republic had one school per 500 of the population, five higher educational institutions and over thirty technical schools. The rate of progress has been soaring since, except for whatever hindrances the present war has imposed on Soviet planning.

Tajiks have adopted the collective method of cultivation, while we rely still on the methods of the Bronze Age. Ploughing, sowing, etc., are usually done by tractors. The central government of the Soviet Union have granted heavy sums for developing the great cotton area of Tajikistan by the most intensive system of irrigation. In 1929,

Tajikistan spent 3 million roubles on irrigation ; in 1930, 12 million roubles, and the budget for 1931 was 61 million, *i.e.*, 50 roubles per inhabitant. Nobody thought of taxing the Tajiks to raise this enormous sum ; Moscow came willingly to the help of a sister-republic in need, (*Cf.* Joshua Kunitz, *Dawn Over Samarkand*, 1935, for details.)

In India, irrigation develops, if at all, slowly and stingily. The old irrigation works have been callously neglected by Government and have fallen into disrepair. The new irrigation work has been conducted on a very limited scale, the total irrigated area was 46·8 million acres in 1913-14, and rose only to 50·5 million twenty years later. It has been carried out on the basis of capital investment demanding a high rate of return, which means heavy burdens on an already overburdened peasantry.

India remains the "agrarian hinterland" of imperialism. Indian industry has been allowed most grudgingly to develop to its present feeble stature. Under the Tsars, industry was concentrated in the "metropolitan" areas of Russia, while Tajiks, like Indians, were hewers of wood and drawers of water, condemned for generations to the idiocy of rural life, to the monotony of backward agriculture. Till the Revolution, Tajikistan had no industries. Today it has preserving factories and silk factories ; textile works are a feature of Stalinabad and a big silk combine of Leninabad. Electric power stations are humming with activity ; cement, brick, oil, printing industries are flourishing. And Soviet geologists have been unceasingly at work, trying to discover wealth for the people stowed away underground in neglected areas.

The progress in public health is phenomenal. In 1914, there were just thirteen doctors in Tajikistan ; they would, of course, be called upon to cater only to the needs of the feudal aristocracy. In 1939, there were 440 doctors, ready for service in every home. In 1914, there were no maternity beds in the abysmally ill-equipped hospitals ; in 1937, there were 240. In 1914, there was no such thing as a maternity and infant welfare centre , twenty-three years later there were thirty-six.

Look at this picture and that—is the comment that comes to one's mind, when contrasting the Soviet health protection system and ours. The death-rate in Tsarist Russia in 1913 was 28.3 per thousand ; the corresponding Indian figure was 30. As early as 1926, that is to say, barely as soon as the Soviets had recovered from the effects of Civil War and Intervention and famine that blockade brought about, the death-rate in the Soviet Union had been brought down to 20.9, while that in India for the same year was still 26.7. In Moscow, the death-rate in 1913 was 23.1 per thousand, and in 1926, 13.4. In Bombay, the death-rate in 1914 was 32.7, and in 1926, 27.6. Figures such as these can be indefinitely multiplied.

The records of deaths from smallpox afford a very instructive comparison. In 1914, there were 76,950 recorded deaths from smallpox in India, or 3.2 per ten thousand of the population ; in 1934, there were 83,925 deaths, or 3 per ten thousand of the population. The Soviet figures show that there the incidence of smallpox has been reduced from 4.7 per ten thousand in 1913 to 0.37 in 1929.

The picture of the rapid advance of the Soviet Union, and most notably its Central Asian Republics, must give cause for furious thought to our people. Imperialism means

exploitation and stagnation ; it saps the vitality of peoples. The comparison of its bleak record with the record of the peoples' unassisted achievement in the Soviet Union gives us a bitter picture, no doubt, but also a picture which holds out hope and confidence for the future. If the Soviet peoples have won their way to freedom and light, why can't we ?

It is only right that in November we shall remember and salute the great Revolution which shook the world in 1917. It is natural for our thoughts to be centred on the Soviet Union when it is leading the peoples of the world in the fight against the barbaric obscenity called Fascism. And today we may well recall the words of Romain Rolland, uttered long before the present war broke out, "When the U. S. .S R. made it possible for me to become convinced that the great social ideal can be realised, I could have wept for joy if my old eyes had not become unaccustomed to tears. I know that the U. S. S. R. is the most reliable guarantee of social progress, that the happiness of mankind is under its guard, that it is our living fortress. And, therefore, I say . The Defence of the U. S. S. R or death !"

THE SOVIETS AND FINLAND

The Finnish drama which has just ended, has been in many ways an eye-opener. Friends of the Soviet Union are happy that her prompt and vigorous action has ensured the safety of her north-western borders and has forestalled the holocaust which Western imperialism was preparing, the united capitalist attack on the socialist fatherland. Just after peace was concluded between the Soviet Union and Finland, on terms that drew the teeth of Mannerheim's unspeakable gang who have so long terrorised the country and dictated its policies, the British Prime Minister moaned before a dejected House of Commons that the recalcitrance of the northern countries prevented the Anglo-

French plan of sending even more effective assistance than had been continuously dispatched during the course of the war. The issue in Finland has, indeed, unmasked the guns of Western imperialism, and of its propaganda agency, the virtuous Second International,—the Social Democratic leadership in every country, which has consistently played its historic role of “labour lieutenants of the capitalist class.” Two decades ago, Western imperialism fought in Finland an offensive fight against the new-born workers’ state. That fight has been repeated lately, happily without success. And all who care for the movement of the world’s workers, all who wish to be on guard for the workers’ state, the Soviet Union, will find a great deal to think about in the parallel military preparations and massing of troops in the Near East ; the open call in the Anglo-French reactionary press, which was publicly championed by the French premier, Daladier, for the sending of expeditionary forces ; the mobilisation of what remains of the League of Nations in an Anti-Soviet crusade (suppressing, simultaneously, the items of Albania and China, victims of aggression, from the agenda) ; the foul campaign about Soviet “infamy” carried on exultantly by Liberal-labour publicists, and the world attack on the Marxist movement, in all countries including our own.

The ferocious and sustained outburst of lying about the U. S. S. R. in relation to Finland must remain for a long time to come, pretty nearly a record. The venom of the capitalist press against the U. S. S. R. for daring to try and undo the mischief done by British and German interventionists in 1918-19, and by the British and German General staff more recently, was even more violent and vituperative than against Germany. When the

Finnish war began, the official press in England and France gave it far greater prominence than the war against Germany. Soviet military might, which broke the resistance of Mannerheim's thugs even in a winter campaign in almost impossible conditions, has damped the unholy ardour of the western jingoes, who were itching for a war on the Soviet Union. Daladier, fulminating over Finland, openly addressed his appeal to those "even in the enemy states." As early as November 14, the London "*Evening Standard*" was anticipating "this paradox emerging : Britain and Germany co-operate to hold Finland up." Duff-Cooper, as an official British propagandist in the U. S. A., was prophesying to his American audiences that "Britain will be at war with Russia very soon." Ambassador Lothian, good Christian and friend of the "holy" Halifax, was guardedly, but none the less clearly, backing up the prophecy. On November 28, Neville Chamberlain said in the House of Commons : "None of us knows how long this war will last, none of us knows in what direction it will develop, *none of us knows when it is ended who will be standing by our side and who will be against us.*" The Minister of War, accepting a present of ambulances to the War Office, went out of his way to make the mystic declaration : "Where these ambulances may go, I know not. *They may render service in theatres of war of which we know not to-day.*" As early as October 1 last year, a letter appeared on the leader page of the London *Times* calling for "*an alliance with the better elements in Germany against the real enemy Russia.*" On October 11, the Paris press threatened that "in the event of a Russo-Finnish war, Britain and France would not respect Soviet neutrality."

On October 31, the *New York Herald Tribune* stated that the object of the war was not to destroy Germany but to "save it for Western civilisation." On November 1 the United States recalled its ambassador from Moscow. On November 19 Italy threatened to turn the Balkans into a second Spain and sent, since then, large numbers of "volunteers" and aeroplanes to Finland. On November 30, before fighting had started, the British National Defence Public Interest Committee, which includes Labour members, was coupling Poland and Finland already as victims of aggression. In India, the government, the European Association and the police began to behave as though we were at war with the Soviet Union. The censorship was enlisted against the Soviet and in favour of the Finns.

Alongside the swashbucklers of Fascism, the Francos and Mussolinis, the Churchills and Mannerheims, the leaders of the Second International, the Tanners, Blums and Citrines found their comfortable home. Those who sternly maintained "non-intervention" against Spanish democracy fighting fascism, were now in the forefront in demanding intervention in Finland against socialism. Having refused a common front with the Soviet Union for the defence of democracy and peace when that was possible, they had now no hesitation in sharing camps with the ex-tsarist Mannerheim, the prize rascal in recent history, and his infamous White Guards against the socialist state. They found at last a "holy war" in the war on socialism. The lying slogan of "democracy versus dictatorship" being no longer handy, they raised a new flag, proclaimed with equal ardour by Franco, Mussolini, Chamberlain, Blum, Attlee, Cole and the rest,—the flag of "western civilisation"

against "Asiatic barbarism"—of imperialism against socialism, in fact.

So the call was sent forth that the Soviet had turned imperialist, that Finland was the innocent little lamb which was being gobbled up by the big bad Soviet wolf. Never was a wicked myth so sedulously propagated. A perfect shriek of ballyhoo was raised by the press in every capitalist country, our own country being no exception. And even Pandit Nehru came out with an attack on Soviet policy which, he thought, had shattered "the ideals of innumerable human beings" by brutally invading "a united democratic country !" The plan of capitalism that workers and the colonial people should be misled as far as possible by their own leaders was very nearly succeeding. To that nefarious plan, the Soviet Union has given the right reply by pulling the teeth of Mannerheim's thugs who masqueraded as the champion of "western civilisation."

II

In 1918-19, the Baltic states, from Lithuania to Finland, were set up as White outposts against the U. S. S. R., a part of the long *cordon sanitaire* marking off "civilisation" from socialism. These states have so long been maintained by the investment of capital and the help of military and naval missions. When a large-scale European war had once again brought back the possibility of massive attack on the first Socialist State, it became the duty of the Soviet Union to change this situation. Obviously, the Soviet Government did not want to do it by warlike means, and the treaties with the Baltic States—Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania—prove it. The Soviets took military action in Finland only when the frontier provocations of the

Mannerheim gang became intolerable. Such provocations were no novelty on the Soviet-Finnish frontier, but they took on an added importance precisely because they came in the midst of a war and showed pretty obviously, that outside agencies were stirring up the Finnish Whites against the U. S. S. R., especially in the hope that during the winter months even the Red military machine would be powerless. The Soviet Union did not precipitate events ; it anticipated a spring offensive against itself, and struck before the coalition of its enemies could effectively emerge. Soviet success has really meant the resumption by the Finnish people of that march toward real independence which was interrupted some twenty years ago by British and German imperialism.

The Labour Press of Great Britain has proclaimed Mannerheim to be the "Liberator" of Finland. In the intervals of permanently "liberating" about 60,000 Finns with a bullet through the head, the unspeakable Mannerheim was a leading figure in the Allied Murmansk expedition and the advance of Yudenitch on Petrograd during the grim days of Intervention against the new-born Soviet, had assisted the British fleet to smash up the Soviet republic of Estonia, raided Soviet Karelia in 1921 with two divisions, intrigued with the British all through the twenties; and in 1935, plotted with the Premier of Hungary and the great Polish landowner Prince Radziwill for a concerted attack on the Soviet Union. The magnificent Finnish workers were robbed of their own Soviets by White Guards and Mannerheim's German friends in 1918. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* speaks of the White terror which killed 15000 men, women and children, and by June 27, 1918, held "73,915 Red rebels, including

4,600 women" as prisoners of war. On February 11, 1919, the London *Times* reported that out of that number, "more than 30,000 men and women are dead". On May 29, 1919, Col. Wedgwood stated in the House of Commons that "Red prisoners were commonly decimated, sometimes twice over and then the survivors were searched for suspects." Those confined in prison camps suffered under "a regime of incredible barbarity .. over one-third died in four months, not merely from starvation, they were even deprived of water." Col. Wedgwood goes on to relate in a recent communication to the *News Chronicle* : "So great was the indignation even in that hard-faced Parliament, that General Mannerheim was then refused permission to come to England." Mannerheim has survived twenty years to add a British K. C. B. to his Tsarist and Hohenzollern decorations, and to be hailed by the Labour Press as the "Finnish liberator."

For the last twenty years, the Finnish ruling class has relied on the methods, sometimes half concealed, of the White Terror. Every democrat and revolutionary has been made to feel the ubiquitous hand of the secret police and the terror of fascist dungeons. Naturally enough, communists have got the worst of the deal, while Social Democrats, being true to type, have run away to be friends with reactionaries. In 1923, the Communist Party was suppressed, after a period of bloody persecution ; this was because in 1922 a large group of communists had been elected to the Parliament, and they had to be ejected, which was promptly done by means of a change in the electoral law. In 1929, there was another resurgence of communist forces which succeeded in sending 23 deputies to the Diet. The big bourgeoisie of Finland now organised the Lappo

fascist movement under Mannerheim and his lieutenant Wallenius who beat up and murdered democrats and workers' representatives. Parliament was not long in obeying its master's voice, seized the worker's presses, banned their unions and handed over their organisation to the fascist dictatorship. When things had quietened down a bit, the Diet passed a vote impartially banning Fascists as well as Communists as intriguing against the integrity of the State. The provision in regard to Fascism was ignored by the Government—which act of cowardice was condoned by the liberal publicist, Sir Ernest Simon, as evidence of the Government's adherence to democratic principles which permit even fascism to flourish ! In 1930 and the following years, the life of every one working in worker's organisations was in peril, and no wonder.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, maybe in a fit of inadvertent fury, condemned the Soviet attack on what he chose to call a "united democratic country." It is, surely, permissible to ask Pandit Nehru : "In what other 'united democratic country' is it necessary to keep 100,000 armed thugs called 'Protective Guards' to hold down the civil population ? In what other 'united democratic country' do the President of the State and the President of Reichstag both get kidnapped by Fascists in the same year ?" The history of this "democracy" is a story of heroic struggle by the decimated ranks of workers and poor peasants to reassert their independence, a story of ruthless administration by the Finno-Swedish bankers, businessmen and big agrarians by alternating waves of Fascist terror or "Social-Democratic" co-operation (backed by fascist forces in the army and the state apparatus). Finnish "independence" has been a pretty euphemism, for it has always

been subject to Anglo-U. S. capital, it has always been subservient to British diplomacy, and has flirted with Nazi expansionist aims whenever British and German imperialists could play the same game and use Finland as a pawn. Who can deny that Finnish Trade Unions have been repeatedly suppressed, and with the usual acquiescence of Social Democrats purged of revolutionary elements, so that, as the British Board of Trade reported in 1938, "the proportion of organised labour in Finland is much smaller than in the Scandinavian countries and trade union funds are restricted?" It is no wonder that the *Statist* (London) wrote of these anaemic unions that "employers have supported Social Democratic labour organisations in their conflicts with the communist organisations." It is no wonder that the chairman of Hambro's Bank (one of his colleagues being Major Astor who owns the *Times*), which has over 50 per cent of its accounts in the north including Finland, could report that "trading profits were good, especially good in a year full of difficulties." None will be surprised to hear that Finnish nickel (which Red Russians were accused of trying to grab) is owned not by Finns, but by the International Nickel Company of Canada (British, U. S. and Canadian capital) which has had an average profit of $8\frac{1}{2}$ million pounds a year, largely by not mining Finnish nickel and so keeping the world prices up! No wonder that in Finland there is still no unemployment insurance, still very inadequate public health services, wage rates are about half of what they are in Scandinavian countries and collective bargaining in the most important industries still non-existent.

Finland is "a gallant little country," and Finland is "honest," because, forsooth, she pays her war-debts regularly to the United States! It is good to remember that these debts which the Finnish people have been made to pay were not incurred for the "war to make the world safe for democracy"—dishonest though that racket was—but for the war "to make the world safe against socialism," for the slaughter of revolutionary workers in countries contiguous to Bolshevism.

This is the country which was portrayed by the world's capitalist Press as the "innocent little lamb" that was going to be gobbled by the "big bad wolf" across the border.

III

For the last twenty years, Finland has been pretty consistently attacking, or intriguing to attack, the Soviet Union. The "liberator" Mannerheim was busy throughout the twenties and thirties. In 1937 the Finnish Ministry of Agriculture tried to lease Petsamo, stolen earlier from the hard-pressed Soviets, as "a fishing concession" to the Germans. The thing had to be dropped, for the Finnish working class, not always daunted by repression, gave the government a bit of their mind, because they knew the Germans were interested not so much in fish as in torpedoes destined for the harbours of Murmansk and Archangel. In 1938 Finland suddenly decided (in defiance of a treaty) that she wanted to fortify the Aaland Islands which hold the entrance to the gulf of Finland. This would also have been grand for Nazi Germany, and Britain and France, which were still in the "appeasement" stage promptly agreed; but the Soviet Union quickly put a stop to it.

Blameless little Finland came to the dispute, just ended, after a long history of threats and menaces. In September last year, Moscow opened negotiations with Helsinki for a pact of mutual assistance similar to those concluded with the Baltic countries, which had stopped any possibility of future attack—whether by Hitler or anyone else. The Soviet Union also requested certain concessions, for which she was prepared to make an adequate return. What those terms were no one knew for quite a time, because the Finnish Government took very great care not to tell the “united democratic country” till the fight had actually started.

Molotov, however, having a free Soviet people to consider, was not so secretive, and his speech of October 31 revealed them. First and foremost was the need to safeguard Leningrad. Leningrad is only 20 miles from the Finnish border, well within the range of a modern gun ; so, as things stood, Mannerheim’s bright boys could any morning start using the second city of the Soviet Union, and centre of the area where a quarter of the entire Soviet production is concentrated, for target practice. Molotov proposed that the frontier should be pushed back some miles in the Karelian isthmus. He offered in return twice the area in Soviet Karelia, a country rich in timber and mineral deposits which has long made the Finnish capitalists’ mouth water. Secondly, it was equally necessary that Leningrad should be secured from the sea, for Kronstadt is too close to be complete protection. He therefore asked for the cession of one or two islands in the Gulf of Finland, which were quite useless to the Finns, again offering territorial compensation. Finally, in order to achieve real security in the Gulf, the Red Navy needed a base at its northern mouth.

They already had in Paldiski (Port Baltic) a base leased from Estonia in the south. If Finland allowed them to lease the Hangoe peninsula, the two bases would then command the entrance with their guns. In return for the lease (*not cession*) of Hangoe for a definite period (that is, long enough for the Hitler nuisance to be eliminated, and to prevent any allied "crusade for the preservation of western civilization"), the Soviet Union was prepared to withdraw its objection to Finland fortifying the Aaland islands, so long as she did it herself and did not allow some other power to have a hand in it. In this way, Finland would gain complete command of the Gulf of Bothnia.

When these terms were revealed, the capitalist press which was already committed to supporting the Finnish government, right or wrong, tried to make out that their acceptance would have compromised Finland's independence. Such was not the view of the Finns, or even of their anti-Soviet Premier Cajander (who was thrown out of his job later), for in a broadcast on October 13, he described them as "not constituting any threat to Finland's independence". Why then were they rejected ?

The reason was that Cajander was in abject fear of a Fascist rising. Until very recently, the country had been under direct Fascist rule, but a little while ago popular pressure had become so great that a milk-and-water "Peasant and Labour" coalition had taken office. For the peasant and labourer they did nothing. They simply sat trembling in their chairs, not daring to offend any one and even so, expecting to be overthrown by force any moment. When the negotiations started, they were given very plainly to understand that surrender would mean an

immediate *pustch*. What is more, as Claude Cockburn revealed in *The Week*, they were informed by the Allies that London and Paris would support the *pustch*. Faced with the choice of acting as agents of reaction or irrevocably throwing in their lot with the workers, the Social Democratic leaders, as usual, preferred the Capitalists.

Then came Molotov's speech of October 31. Now the cat was out of the bag, for soon the Finnish people would come to know the truth. Time was running short for the Mannerheim gang. They already had seven divisions in the Karelian isthmus and over 300,000 men under arms, with promises of money, guns, planes and volunteers from abroad. So, on November 6, Mannerheim coolly opened fire with heavy artillery on the Soviet frontier outposts at Manila in Karelia. This was not the first time that outrages of this kind had occurred on the Karelian border. In fact, in Karelia as on the borders of Manchukuo, there have been continuous frontier incidents for years. It was, however, the first time that heavy artillery had come into action against entirely peaceful troops. The Red Army not unnaturally asked its government for leave to deal with the matter as they had dealt with the Japanese at Chungfukung.

If the Soviet government did nothing, the next shells would probably land in Leningrad. Besides, the incident showed that the Finns were arming to the teeth and meant to fight. Doubtless, our *satyagrahis* would have started spinning on the border and asking Mannerheim to join them. Somehow this idea did not occur to the Soviet government.

The Finns, of course, having made a conflict inevitable, offered arbitration. Even the capitalist press has not

said much about that, because any one who is not a complete fool knows what that offer was worth. What arbitrator among all the nations of Europe would have given the Soviet case a fair hearing? No, the only possible course was to cease dealing with the Finnish assassins and assist the Finnish people in setting up a new, democratic and responsible government.

IV

The moment that hostilities began, a stream of propaganda poured out of the Finnish embassy in London. Photographs of "atrocities" and so forth were distributed wholesale. Claude Cockburn in *The Week* revealed the origin of this material. The earliest photographs, he said, were so badly done and in such a hurry that one could see where the "atrocities" were painted in. Then the "Riga correspondents", real and fictitious, chimed in with stories which are easy to pick up in a centre of currency and jewel smugglers, "White Guardists", *saboteurs* and spies. After the war got going, the propaganda could be done through British official channels with the use of the censorship to block any attempt to refute it.

Nevertheless it was possible to find out a little of what was going on in Finland. Estonian newspapers reported that the Ryti government (direct nominees of the Bank of England) was ruthlessly hunting down and shooting supporters of the Peoples' Government. The evacuation of Helsinki was less intended as a measure of protection against air-raids than as a drastic police measure. Thousands of people were driven homeless into the freezing countryside where they could be handled by the "Protective Guards." Even so, the Helsinki authorities

were so frightened of revolt or sabotage that citizens who remained were in many cases forbidden to leave their houses.

Day after day, the press was filled with denunciations of "the Soviet Government's ruthless air war on defenceless civilians." Soon, however, they ceased publishing the casualty lists, for the ones already issued were too revealing and showed that only military objectives were being bombarded. On January 22, *Reuter* reported as follows: "The important port of Uleaborg in Finland's waist was raided on Saturday by 20 bombers. Telegraph wires were badly damaged, but there were no casualties." The use of that word "but" is an education in capitalist journalism. An important munitions port, a perfectly legitimate military objective, is bombarded. The account makes it clear that exceptional care was taken to avoid injuring civilians. "But there were no casualties."

"Helsinki in a week" was said to be the Soviet slogan, but it was a lie unsupported by evidence and contrary to the very nature of Soviet military tactics which are based on destroying the enemy's machinery of repression of the people, not the people themselves. Even if the Red Army had been as inefficient as its critics say, it could by blood and iron have smashed through Finland long ago. The business might have taken longer than the Germans took to overrun Poland, for Finland is geographically difficult for mechanised divisions. But it could have been done. It was not done, simply because the speed of advance of the Red Army was on purpose dependent on the success of the Finnish people themselves to come into their own. The situation soon changed, however, and later Red offensives were full scale, and not merely ancillary to the effort of the People's Government which proved ineffective in

view of the wider situation which was on the brink of world war. That war has been avoided by Soviet success, the capitulation of the Mannerheim gang, and peace on terms that are very much more favourable to the Soviet Union than those offered to Finland last October.

The might of the Soviets has ensured that Finland is no longer an immediate menace, and comes within the orbit of Soviet influence. Scandinavian countries have realised the danger of flirting with the idea of an anti-Soviet crusade. Fair Karelia is going to have a real people's government on the Soviet model. The world has realised that war on the Soviets cannot be lightly embarked on by powers that have long been itching to annihilate the workers' state.

Of the greatest significance for the future is the policy of the leadership of the Labour Party and of the Second International. They began their course of betrayal with imperialism and disruption of the working class movement in 1914-18. After the war they served as propaganda agents for those who were drowning revolution in blood in different European countries. They have been the prime agents in the betrayal of Spanish democracy and in the prevention of that Peace Front which would alone have saved democracy and progress. Over Finland they have shouted themselves hoarse, alongside the anti-Soviet warmongers for whom a Belisha was beaconing the way. Perfidy to the working class has been the badge of their tribe, and of them, we must all beware, if we stand, as we must,

ON GUARD FOR THE SOVIET UNION

if we are to bring nearer that new world of freedom and social justice which will rise out of the ashes of the old.

First written in March 1940.

SOCIALISED MEDICINE IN THE U. S. S. R.

Socialisation of medicine was the slogan raised by Dr. Nikolai Alexandrovich Semashko, who had been in exile with Lenin from 1907 to 1917, and was entrusted by the Bolshevik leader with the task of organising in July 1918 the People's Commissariat of Health. The central and local organs of the Soviet State must take over the responsibility of providing for every one, at his earliest need, free, accessible and skilled medical treatment. "Only then will disappear, like a shadow before sunlight, all private hospitals and all commercial private practice. This is the perspective of communist medicine." The Soviet government had inherited from its Tsarist predecessor a terrible heritage of insanitary conditions, considerably accentuated by the devastating effects of the Great War.

It was a well-nigh impossible burden which had to be shouldered by Semashko and his colleagues, but they set about their task with characteristic heroism, and the impress of the revolutionary transformation of ideas implicit in communism can be seen in the goal that they set up. The reason Soviet medicine works, they pointed out, is not only for healing but for the prevention of ill-health, *the creation of the positive health of the people*. From the beginning, Soviet medicine has been free from the historic distinction between preventive and curative treatment. The object of the Soviet health service has always been to cover the whole space of human life, not excluding even the period that is antenatal. It has never known any limits of age or sex or race or nationality ; the Uzbek and the Kirghiz and the host of other peoples who had been deliberately kept under by the Tsars, share equally, as Soviet citizens, in the health service of the community ; it has always tabooed any idea of philanthropy and charity about the care of the sick, which in capitalist countries helps, in effect, to keep down social discontent and prevent organised social effort. Civil war, foreign intervention and famine in the Soviet Union made it impossible to have anything but a new start in the first five years of its history. But since 1921, there has been progress, which in quantity and in quality is without parallel anywhere else in the world.

The health service of the Soviet Union is completely centralised. Each local Soviet works under a single directing body which prepares a uniform plan for, among other things, the best utilisation of the existing system of hospitals and clinics and for the construction of new ones, for the most effective distribution of the available

medical cadres, particularly of the specialists, for raising their qualifications and for the technical re-equipment of medical institutions. The local Soviets organise anti-epidemic measures and sanitary inspection of food, housing and public utilities (water works, drainage, laundries, etc.) ; they have to protect the health of the workers and peasants, take special care of maternity and infancy, control health resorts, organise pharmaceutical and medical supplies, train physicians and their assistants, and provide for the sanitary education of the masses. The central Commissariat distributes the medical personnel to serve not only the main industrial regions and the Collective and State farms, but also the most distant regions and districts.

Another feature of the health service is the participation in its work of many members of the Soviets, who according to law must take part in the work of one or more of the different departments. These representative citizens keep the service in continuous touch with the needs of the people. Other workers, who are not members of the Soviets, may also, if they are interested, join in its work, and as a matter of fact, many do, and establish "Health nuclei" in every factory and in every Collective and State farm, and help to organise the sanitary education of the masses. "The protection of the health of the workers is the task of the workers themselves"—such is their slogan. Apart from millions of pamphlets and leaflets, the cinema and the wireless is used for health propaganda ; there are special sanitary education institutes and museums and exhibitions ; sometimes the railways would have exhibition carriages, propaganda plays would be staged, and sanitary propaganda trials (drunkard trials, trial of a prostitute,

etc.) be held. Is it too much to expect that we in India shall also, in the near future, start work on more or less the same lines for the sanitary education of our people ?

To prevent the development of disease—such was the object laid down by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. This prophylactic policy, apart from its importance, was specially necessary in the Soviet Union where as in our own country, the old insanitary conditions of life had largely survived. Mere curative measures were thus not enough. Prevention is achieved, in the first place, by the structure and methods of the Soviet health service, which is organised with a view not only to curing disease, but to abolishing its cause by studying the working and living conditions of every patient. It is achieved, in the second place—and this is very important from the Soviet point of view—by the whole system of socialist construction, by the establishment of public utilities in towns and villages, housing, communal feeding, etc. and by such enactments as the five-day working week, compulsory and paid holidays, insurance against old age and sickness and disability, maternity vacations, etc. Medical stations in the factories, for example, are not content with rendering first aid ; they take part in all measures for the improvement of labour conditions. As communal feeding is exceedingly widespread at present and has percolated even to the villages—it helps, one must remember, to emancipate women from domestic drudgery and raises the productivity of labour—doctors are commissioned to supervise the dining room and the proper storing and preparation of food and to provide dietetic food for those who suffer from intestinal diseases. Sidney and Beatrice Webb have given

a graphic description of what they saw in the Stalingrad tractor works in 1932. One hundred and ten qualified doctors (four-fifths of them women), together with 135 nurses catered for 40,000 operatives. Apart from ordinary treatment of some 2500 daily applicants, the health centre gave, free of cost, many forms of specialised treatment, including radiant heat-therapy, psycho-therapy, mud-baths, and special baths for rheumatism in sand brought from the Caucasus. The immense factory restaurant daily provided six different invalid diets in separate dining-rooms, and children were taken care of in creches, etc. so that the mother could look after her own work at home or in the city.

The noted Irish playwright, Sean O'Casey once said that two reasons were enough to make him a communist, one was that Moscow housed the world's best single collection of modern French paintings, and the second that women and children were better cared for in the Soviet Union than anywhere else in the world. In Tsarist Russia, the working woman was the most downtrodden and exploited of beings. The November Revolution of 1917 made the woman man's equal in every respect. Protection of female labour, the provision, for example, of compulsory leave with pay before and after childbirth, has been a special care of the Soviet State. The mass participation of women in industry has been made possible by the provision of creches which admit children up to the age of four. The little Chuvash Republic, for instance, which under Tsarism, was a criminally neglected and backward province, had 5000 creches in 1932. From 1929 to 1932, the number of creches in the Union increased from 251,400 to 4,529,000. Milk kitchens, children's

food stations, "breast-milk stations", women's consultation bureaux, maternity homes (the slogan being : "No woman must give birth to a child at home"), mother-and-child carriages on long-distance railway journeys, the fight against infantile infectious diseases, the propaganda against abortion and at the same time its legalisation, with the results that abortions are much less in number there than in countries where it is prohibited—these are some of the features of the Soviet health service that must compel interest and admiration. The non-Russian regions of the Union, cruelly and systematically ignored by the Tsar's government, are now equal participants in this great experiment

The principal diseases are systematically tackled by organised concentrations of medical forces. There are special institutes for plague and typhus, enteric and small-pox, venereal disease and malaria, etc. We may take the campaign against tuberculosis, for years the greatest scourge of the Russian people, as typical of the way the Soviets are struggling to ensure health and happiness to the people.

More than a score of institutes are engaged in scientific research, and they are situated not only at such places as Moscow and Kharkov, but at Minsk, Tiflis and Samarkand. Month by month, ever since 1923, the record of their work is published in the voluminous Russian journal, "Problems of Tuberculosis." Special tuberculosis dispensaries, which aim not only at curing the sick, but at examination of his living and working conditions and action accordingly, have been spread out all over the Union. In 1918 they numbered only 4 ; in 1929, 273 ; in 1933, 404. There are, besides, numerous tuberculosis

hospitals, large and small, for every manifestation of the disease. In 1928 there were 2,757 such hospitals ; in 1933, 4007 ; in 1928, 10505 tuberculosis sanatoria ; in 1933, 16,242 ; in 1928, 7447 localities providing convalescent homes ; in 1933, 10,556 ; in 1928, auxiliary tuberculosis institutions, 7637 , in 1933, 10,181.

An important achievement in this line is the so-called "night sanatoria", in Moscow and various other cities, which is a unique Soviet speciality. They are meant to deal with the early stages of the disease when the patient need not give up work and go to a hospital or sanatorium. At this stage the patient often works, goes to the night sanatorium, washes himself, changes clothes, receives proper food, sleeps under hygienic conditions, and is given necessary medical aid, and returns to work in the morning. Moscow has ten of these sanatoria,—this is a 1933 figure—which admit not only sufferers from tuberculosis in its early stages, but also suspected cases, and convalescents of all kinds, persons suffering from nervous exhaustion or digestive troubles, and sometimes even from over-work or neurasthenia, find a welcome there.

The task of recruiting doctors have not been easy for the Soviet authorities. There was, in the beginning, reluctance on the part of many qualified doctors to serve the Soviets. But the recalcitrants are now almost a non-existent minority. A most striking example in the change in their attitude is provided by the late Professor Tarasevich, reputed all over Europe, who began heading the anti-Soviet Pirogov Society of Doctors in 1917-18, and by the end of 1918 was so convinced of Soviet good faith as to work whole-heartedly as Chairman of the Scientific

Council of the Commissariat of Health till the time of his death.

Tsarist Russia had fewer than 1300 qualified doctors, or less than one per 7000 of the population, and in rural areas less than one per 21000. By the middle of 1935, the qualified medical practitioners had been multiplied seven times and had become one to every 2000 of the population. Candidates for medical training, who may be of any age, are nominated by all sorts of bodies, mostly by tradeunion and school committees, though individuals also may and do apply. The recommendations of local Soviets are examined by an expert body, there is now no exclusion, as there was earlier, of sons and daughters of the intelligentsia.

The training for the medical practitioner, which lasts five years, combines an unusual amount of practical work with theoretical teaching. Students completing their course are immediately appointed by the Commissariat of Health, usually for a three years' term in a rural district. doctor members of the Communist Party have to shoulder, as a rule, the heaviest and least attractive jobs. Hours of work of the doctors in the Union are restricted to a maximum of six per day, there are, besides, annual vacations on full pay, in addition, for those practising in rural districts, to six months' study leave on full pay every three years. Private practice, not entirely forbidden, brings only a very small additional income to the few elderly men in the larger cities who mostly take advantage of it.

The most important cities furnish, naturally, the highest degree of medical organisation. Sidney and Beatrice Webb have given a picture of Moscow where, we find, the population is divided for medical purposes into units of between 40,000 and 80,000 people, subdivided into

groups of 2000 or 3000 persons, in charge of doctors and nurses and health visitors allotted to them. The members of the clinical staff see their patients in their homes, if necessary ; but if well enough, they come to the health centre. The Webbs saw a centre in Leningrad, where 2000 patients are seen every day, by appointment. Lectures are given in a large hall : on its walls are posters and health diagrams, cases containing samples of proper food, clothing and even children's toys. In the prophylactorium is the birth control clinic, with samples of the apparatus required ; a lawyer attends regularly to give advice to women concerning their rights and those of their children ; psychotechnical examinations are made of school-leaving youths to determine what vocations they are best suited for. An English workman, engaged on constructing the Moscow underground railway, gives an entertaining description, which the Webbs have quoted, of the way he was treated for what he thought was a common cold, his throat, nostrils and ears were examined and his lungs too ; he was then sent on, protesting all the time to the dentist who found he needed a set of false teeth, this and the medicine was, of course, given him free. Whoever is interested should also read the Webbs' account of the splendid provision for street casualties in Moscow which can give points to the great cities of Western Europe and the U. S. A.

I wish to refer, in conclusion, to the great scheme which forms part of the Second Five Year Plan—the construction, on a site of more than a square mile in the Silver Forest near Moscow, of the “Medical city”, designed to be the largest and most modern medical institute in the world. The director is Professor Lev Nicolasvich Feodorov,

pupil of the great Pavlov. A feature will be the "Clinic of the Healthy Man", where the behaviour of normal individuals after the normal activities will be observed and studied. A technical staff of 5500 doctors, nurses and research workers, two hundred patients, each in a private room; almost one laboratory per patient; shops, theatres, libraries and all the paraphernalia of city life—such are the features of this gigantic scheme. The total expenses for its establishment reach into astronomical figures. But the results of this experiment may well prove of immeasurable importance.

A recent estimate in our country showed that the proportion of doctors to the population is 1 to 10,000. This is bad enough; but it looks worse when one finds that for lack of a co-ordinating social policy, the proportion is as high as or even higher than 1 to 1000 in certain urban areas, where medical unemployment is most acute! The Soviet system, of course, is based on a philosophy which is yet to win its way in India. The Soviets have not only multiplied medical facilities, they have injected into the health service a new spirit. That is why one finds, for example, Dr. M. A. Meyer, formerly director of the New York Psychoanalytic Institute, saying that the number of cases of neurosis, depression and suicides is lower in the Soviet Union than in the capitalist countries, because the Soviet citizen is relieved of certain anxieties, fear of unemployment in particular, which exist elsewhere. The Soviet system, therefore will differ in quality so long as the Soviet way of looking at society is not adopted elsewhere. But there is something about the quantity of Soviet achievement which is almost staggering. Shall we refuse even to learn from Soviet example?

Reprinted from Calcutta Municipal Gazette (1936).

HOW THE SOVIETS FIGHT CRIME

It is good to remind ourselves from time to time of the Soviet attitude towards crime and of what the Soviet Union has been doing in regard to those who have strayed from the path of good citizenship. From all accounts, the achievement of the Soviets in this direction has not only been dramatically arresting, but has far-reaching implications as well. The Soviets want punishment to be genuinely reformatory, since the social context is largely responsible for crime, and that given proper assistance the average criminal proves himself to be no worse than the normal citizen and can return usefully to normal life if no stigma continues to be attached to him. As a consequence of this attitude, the judiciary in the Soviet Union takes a direct interest in the penal system, the idea

being that no legal official can do his work properly if he can persuade himself to ignore the fate of people for whose destiny he is so largely responsible. There is, further, the insistence that as far as is possible, the prisoner should be allowed to live a full life, that he may not come to lose that self-respect which is essential to his personality. All prisoners, therefore, must do normal industrial work and receive normal wages, for work, after all, is the basis of self-respect. They have the right to vacations, to practically unlimited and uncensored correspondence, to a generous allowance of visits. They must have leisure, but, not the sort of vacuous interlude which prisoners elsewhere can expect. Prisoners are even allowed, in their leisure, to attend classes in the University. Professor H. J. Laski met in Soviet prisons two men who, while still serving their sentences, had qualified respectively as a lawyer and a chemical engineer in Moscow University. All prisons are fitted with wireless, not for the delectation of prison officials, but for the prisoners themselves. Classes in cultural and vocational subjects are another feature of the creative use of leisure. Facilities for gymnastics, libraries, dramatic performances, concerts for and by the prisoners, prison newspapers which publish without hindrance the prisoners' complaints—these are some of the features of the Soviet prison system. Prisoners do, besides, have a sense of self-government. They can express themselves in their newspapers and they have not the terrible haunting sense of being always under the supervision of an unfriendly eye. No wonder that men with long records of convictions have become successful engineers, lawyers, civil servants, some have entered the Red Army and amply justified their choice.

A determined effort can, in the right atmosphere, restore a man's lost self-respect—such is the practical discovery made by the Soviet prison system.

“THE ROAD TO LIFE”

We in India have not had an opportunity of seeing a remarkable Soviet film, “The Road to Life”. It was a factual description of how the G. P. U.—dreaded by all who have been concerned, directly or indirectly, in counter-revolution, for treason to the Revolution is the gravest crime in Soviet penology—performed the almost impossible feat of restoring to citizenship numbers of those who were apparently lost to any sense of civic duty. In 1925, hundreds of thousands of homeless waifs, the sad product of civil war, foreign intervention and famine, were scouring the cities and towns of the Union. Djerjinski, the head of the Ogpu, was given the task of “liquidating” this formidable problem. In the course of the ensuing seven years, these hundreds of thousands of apparently incorrigible vagrants—boys and girls, all of them—were with a considerable amount of success, “reconditioned”. The task, of course, was not easy ; rebuffs for the reformer were only too plentiful ; but Djerjinski and his colleagues had the courage to persevere, they were convinced that when the young vagrants had been removed from corrupting influences, cajoled and sometimes even intimidated into accepting the type of work likely to appeal to their minds, and given the means of subsistence, they could yet be salvaged for society. They were not wrong in their hope, for a remarkably large proportion of the once home-less and thoroughly mischievous waifs have already made good as citizens.

A REMARKABLE EXPERIMENT

As illustrations of the Soviet attitude towards crime, may be mentioned only two remarkable experiments which have been more than justified by results. One is the *Bolshevo*, a unique reformatory settlement which, Sidney and Beatrice Webb assure us, go further, alike in promise and achievement, towards an ideal treatment of offenders against society than anything else in the world. Nearly a thousand inmates are accommodated in this establishment situated on the country estate of an expropriated millionaire, and combining manufacturing production with agriculture. Criminals from every part of the Union are shown there that a life of regulated industry and recreation, with as much freedom as is practicable, is more pleasant than the always precarious life of crime and beggary. Prisoners, after a certain period, are allowed to have their wives with them, and each family is allotted its own homestead. Some find their wives in the settlement; many refuse to leave even on the expiration of their sentences. The Webbs, Professor Laski, D. N. Pritt, K.C., and many others have visited this settlement and found it a most inspiring example of how crime can be tackled. *Bolshevo*, besides, is not the only institution of its kind; there were in the Soviet Union in 1935 ten other settlements on the same plan.

THE WHITE SEA—BALTIC CANAL EPIC

Perhaps even more remarkable than prison reforms or child-rescue work, is the constructive work of the Soviet authorities in connexion with the building of the White Sea-Baltic Canal. A large proportion of the work was done by men sentenced to imprisonment for such

offences as robbery, embezzlement, assault, and homicide. There were even many technical specialists recruited from among persons convicted for counter-revolutionary activities. These convicts serving their sentences did not behave as conscripted labourers ; they rose to the height of the occasion, they had as lively a sense as the others that they were engaged on a work of great public utility. The great Soviet writer, Maxim Gorki, described this almost incredible experiment in glowing terms : "Out of the ranks of law-breakers of 15 years there were salvaged thousands of highly qualified workers and more than 100 agronomists, engineers, physicians and technicians. In bourgeois countries such a thing is impossible.Man is by nature quick-witted and it is very seldom that stupidity is conditioned by one's physical make-up. More often than not, it is the result of bourgeois class violence. Among the tens of thousands, there were many who at once grasped the importance of such a work for the state, and the physically healthy were eager to exert themselves. The wildly flowing rivers and the swamps of Karelia, her fields and woods covered with huge boulders—here was something to struggle against". On the successful conclusion of this tremendous experiment decorations were awarded to dozens of the convict labourers ; the sentences of 12,484 were wholly remitted, and of 59,516 others partly remitted. The White Sea-Baltic Canal was not merely a great engineering feat ; it was a triumph in human regeneration.

The Soviet system has not altogether escaped criticism. The treatment of Kulak counter-revolutionaries has been usually pointed out by liberal sticklers as one of the blots on Soviet prison administration. In saying this, however,

one must not forget that many convicted of "wrecking" and similar activities—the famous Ramzin group of engineers, for example—were treated with the greatest consideration and were returning the compliment by placing their expert knowledge at the service of the community. Former wreckers have been specially rewarded by the Soviet Government for having displayed great creative initiative and outstanding work. Sidney and Beatrice Webb found, for instance, in 1932 the best room in the best hotel which they thought was reserved for them to be meant really for a Russian specialist who had been sentenced to a long term of imprisonment for counter-revolutionary activities, but was then working for the trust with which he was formerly associated. The Soviet system, thus, is something unique in the world. Whoever cares for the welfare of the community would heartily applaud such achievement, particularly when one sees in Fascist countries even in normal times a revival of medieval forms of punishment, of which the Nazi practice decreed by Hitler, of beheading by the axe is the ferocious symbol. It is not necessary, of course, to think of the Soviet system as perfect. Not every brick can be in place when the structure of a new world is painfully being reared. But when the new world emerges before our eyes and fights with undying glory the cruel challenge of Fascist barbarians, we shall be less than human if we fail to be inspired by the heroism and determination of its makers.*

*For the purposes of this article, I have borrowed heavily from Sidney and Beatrice Webb's "Soviet Communism"; Lenka von Kroeber's, "Soviet Russia Fights Crime", and H. J. Laski's "Law and Justice in Soviet Russia".

TWO LEADERS

I

With that instinctive sense of drama, for which the Russians have long been famous, the Red Army has broken through the siege of Leningrad right on the eve of the anniversary of Lenin's death. For sixteen heroic months the city of Lenin defied the death-trap which European fascism had prepared for it. The tables now begin to be turned ; over the wide expanse of the Russian front, a gigantic debacle stares the fascists in the face ; payment back in their own coin will be given the Hitler-hordes who, on June 22, 1941, like thieves in the night, had broken into Soviet soil and desecrated the workers' own country.

Every year, on January 21, all the world salutes Comrade Lenin, as the greatest of all leaders of the

people. Architect of the Bolshevik party and organiser of the November Revolution, founder and guiding spirit of the Soviet Republics and the Communist International, disciple of Marx and leader of the international proletariat, Lenin has left as legacy a heap of treasure that neither moth nor rust can corrupt, that lights as a beacon the peoples' path towards freedom.

A tin-god of intellectuals who has now somewhat fallen from grace—H. G. Wells—saw Lenin in the hectic period following the Intervention and spoke of him as “the little man in the Kremlin” who harboured Utopian dreams. Unable, congenitally, to realise the significance of Lenin's historic formulation that “Socialism is Soviet Government *plus* electrification”, a formulation which foreshadowed the Five Year Plans, Wells with characteristic vanity, spoke of Bolshevism as “the sabotage of civilisation by the disappointed.” Thirteen years later, this same man had an interview with Stalin, reminding one of the pigmy meeting the giant, and strutted out of the Kremlin, happy in the superiority of his own paltry and pathetic schemes over Soviet planning. Today he vociferates that he is the world's foremost revolutionary, “fifty years ahead of the communist party”. It is a pity that Wells strayed from the task for which he was best fitted—who is not grateful for “Kipps” and “Tono-Bungay” and his delicious short stories?—and poses as a social prophet. Those who are inclined still to do him reverence, should remember how he said in his Autobiography: “For the purposes of revolutionary theory the rest of humanity matters only as the texture of mud matters when we design a steam-dredger to keep a channel clear.” If the people's name is mud, any way, why bother to dredge it? “I have never believed in

the superiority of the inferior" is Wells' pompous and fatuous answer. No wonder the majesty of Lenin is beyond the ken of men of his ilk.

Lenin often repeated his famous saying that "*without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement*". He understood, supremely, how Marxism was not a dogma but a guide to action, but he knew the dangers of deviation, the dangers of going off the rails of correct theory. It thus devolved on him to cleanse, mercilessly, the augean stables of the Second International. It was he who exposed how the Dans, the Martovs, the Adlers, the Bauers, the Scheidemanns, the Hilferdings, the Kautskys and even the Plekhanovs were in reality fighters for the crumbs which fell from the bourgeois table, and were ready to be content with the gilded lollipops from the parliamentary confectionery.

When only twenty-nine, Lenin wrote in exile a most important economic work, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*. Another remarkable treatise, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* related all contemporary intellectual advance to the theory of dialectical materialism and castigated the many pseudo-materialists who were really furnishing clever disguises for idealism and reaction. It is not necessary here to give a catalogue of his other works which are classics of Marxism, but perhaps it will be pertinent to refer to his postscript to *The State and Revolution*, written on the eve of the November Revolution, in which he says that it is pleasanter and more urgent to participate in a revolution than to write about it. Here, indeed, is an expression of that unity of theory and action which is fundamental to Marxism.

Lenin knew that Communism was not "a poem born of the cool night wind", but was the realistic problem of

the quest for a new social equilibrium ; and this, according to the Marxian analysis, consisted in the abolition of the conditions which produced a division into classes. The starting-point was the seizure of power by the Party which would transfer the apparatus of the State to the workers and would work out the strategy for defeating the resistance of the class in power. The case would be the same, whether the state was clothed in democratic forms or not, since in a class society democracy could never be more than a convenient cover for the rule of the dominant class.

The struggle for power in a modern community, Lenin emphasised, can never take the form of a conspiratorial *coup d'état*. Equally sternly, he condemned the theory of "spontaneity", held by romantic individuals who idealised the proletariat, that on the appointed day crowds would determine on the final struggle and we shall get up on a sublime Monday morning and witness a new world. Lenin taught that neither a band of long-haired doctrinaires nor of soft-footed conspirators, but that the Party, correctly representing the masses through its most active, conscious and devoted section, and with its deep-laid basis in the working class and its mass organisations, will be the architect of the change. *No army can fight without leaders, without a general staff, without organisation, without a theory of war, an understanding of strategy and tactics. Lenin taught how these things must be provided to the working class by its disciplined detachment, its Party.*

In 1917, when many of his clay-footed, flamboyant comrades were characteristically wobbling, Lenin saw in the Soviets the rival state-in-embryo and valued their advance, not in terms of ordinary political theory but

solely because they focussed working-class power, whereas the machinery of the existing state was bound by a hundred threads to the ruling class. Zinoviev and Kamenev did their utmost to expose and upset the schemes of the insurrection in November ; the lordly Trotsky spoke of the revolutionary vigilance of Lenin as "malevolent and morally disgusting suspiciousness". None stood by Lenin with more steadfast resolution than his disciple Stalin who is today at the helm of the Soviet State, while the Trotskys and Zinovievs have found their place in the dung-heap of history.

As the infant Soviet State surmounted stupendous obstacles, it was Lenin's task never to let the party give wing to Utopian illusions. His direction—throughout the period from "War Communism" to the New Economic Policy—showed flexibility in face of changing situations. *He was charged with reintroducing capitalism and betraying the Revolution. And he lashed his accusers in debate as "slaves of phrases," as romanticists who wished always to live in the highlights of melodrama.* This realism was the saving of the Soviet, and this is the secret of Soviet glory today. Stalin, like Lenin, has lashed phrase-mongers and cast them out of the party and the councils of the State.

The superb "nationalities policy" of the Soviet Union owes its inception to the genius of Lenin and of Stalin. "Left" internationalists like Bukharin had demanded the rejection of the rights of self-determination and secession for nationalities on the specious plea that they were led by or even consisted of bourgeois elements. *Leninism brought the national question down from the lofty heights of high-sounding declarations to the solid ground of facts, and declared that pronouncements about the "equality of nations"*

which are not reinforced by the direct support of the proletarian parties to the liberation movement of the oppressed nations are meaningless and false. The road to victory in the west, as Stalin pointed out, leads through the revolutionary alliance with the liberation movement of the colonies and dependencies against imperialism. It is in the context of this formulation that the full import of the Soviet "nationalities policy" can be realised.

"The course of the Revolution", Lenin was fond of saying, "is not as straight as the Nevsky Prospect". Since Lenin's death, the Revolution has marched on from victory to victory, and its course, naturally, has often been zig-zag, which enabled slanderers to give tongue to their malice. But the main Leninist outlines have been followed and elaborated; the preservation and strengthening of the people's fortress of revolution, the achievement of the victory of socialism over a sixth of the world's surface, the proud recognition by the world's peoples of the Soviets as their ever-active vanguard—all this is the tribute to Lenin paid in blood and toil by Lenin's party.

We in India may well recall that in 1908 Lenin hailed the Indian working class on their first decisive emergence as an organized factor in national life, when in Bombay they staged a six-day political strike in protest against the six years' sentence on Balgangadhar Tilak. During the war of 1914-18, Lenin welcomed India's entry into the revolutionary world movement. Stalin, later, expounded how Leninism anticipates breaches in imperialism at its weakest links, and found in India's young and militant revolutionary proletariat, in alliance with the movement for national liberation, a bright star of hope for world freedom.

Lenin belonged to all peoples, and on this memorable day, we joyfully join the disinherited in every country to render homage to our incomparable comrade, and renew our vow never to rest till in a world freed of all exploitation, such things as science, art and culture cease to be the monopoly of a small minority, and man, happy in his new-found strength, becomes truly "the captain of his earth".*

II

"Leaders may come and go ; only the people are eternal". This is a typical pronouncement of the man whom the world's publicists, with few honourable exceptions, have reviled for years as a ruthless dictator, the man whom today, in a changing international context, the world salutes as a magnificent leader of peoples fighting for freedom.

Greetings poured in on Moscow on the occasion, lately, of Stalin's sixty-third birthday. It was evidence of the profound admiration and gratitude which all who care for freedom and civilisation have come to feel for the Red Army and the Soviet peoples, and their glorious leader Stalin.

In normal times this much-maligned "dictator" does not allow public celebration of his birthday. Anecdotes about him, how, for example, he will send an aeroplane with medicaments to Central Asia to save a child which

* Reprinted from *Indo-Soviet Journal*, Jan. 22, 1943.

otherwise would have been lost, pass from mouth to mouth in the Soviet Union, but are hardly ever published. Stalin insists that homage to him applies exclusively to his policy which is decided by what he has called "the Areopagus of the Party", and so when the Soviet Congress gave him an uproarious ovation after the new constitution which bears his name was adopted, he himself joined in the applause to show that he did not accept the homage as appreciation of Stalin the individual but solely of his policy.

The progressive peoples of all the world hail Stalin, inspite of his personal reticence, as their great and glorious leader, cast pre-eminently in the mould of the Leninist party, bone of its bone, flesh of its flesh.

He was a child of want, who rebelled against the slavery of an ecclesiastical seminary, who from early youth was a thirsty student of the algebra of revolution, and who clearly understood that its main moving force, its sole leader, could be the proletariat.

He went through his baptism of fire in Tiflis, Baku and Batum, and became before long a leading figure in the workers' movement. Repeatedly jailed and exiled by the Tsarist gendarmes, he managed often to escape back to his comrades. More than any other disciple of Lenin, he became one with the main party cadres who, both 'underground' and in open legal organisations built up the Leninist Party. Stalin is, supremely, the embodiment of the whole historical experience of the party.

In Baku, Stalin the leader of the *international* proletariat was born. Baku is the border between Europe and Asia. It was a centre of international capital, a happy hunting ground for the Nobels, the Rothschilds, the Deterdings and the Urquharts, for the octopus of Finance-Capital

stretching its tentacles across the Caucasus into Turkey and Iran.

It was this experience, pre-eminently, which helped him work out the national question in all its ramifications, and furnished the foundation of the Soviets' superb "nationalities policy" which has extorted praise from the sternest foe.

Stalin was made of clay very different from that which went to the composition of wobbly intellectuals and "revolutionary" histrionicists like Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin and Trotsky. This explains his indomitable conduct on the eve of October 1917 and after, when he was Lenin's closest comrade-in-arms.

The task of building socialism over a sixth of the earth's surface, which fell largely on Stalin's shoulders after the death of his master, was more than herculean. And it was rendered the more difficult by the windbag deviations of erstwhile revolutionaries who had lost all faith in the people and who were to end up ingloriously as traitors to the cause and enemies of the Soviet State.

Here are some words of Stalin, spoken in 1927, which give a fine sketch of the basic character of Bolsheviks on the one hand, and on the other, of the faint-hearts and defeatists who formed the Opposition to the Party line : "Have you ever seen fishermen when a storm is brewing on a great river—say, the Yenisei ? I have seen them many a time, in the face of a storm, one group of fishermen will muster all their forces, encourage their fellows and boldly put out to meet the storm : 'Cheer up, lads, hold tight to the tiller, cut the waves, we'll pull her through !' But there is another type of fishermen who, on sensing a storm, lose heart, begin to snivel, and demoralise their own ranks : 'What a misfortune ! A storm

is brewing ; lie down, boys, in the bottom of the boat, shut your eyes, let's hope she'll make the shore somehow !'

Though the Opposition fluctuated in emphasis between "Right" and "Left," basically its motivation was the same—lack of confidence in the people, in the capacity of the working class. The Party, learning from Lenin and Stalin, and the experience of the Revolution, held that it was possible to build socialism in the Soviet Union. It was, of course, true that Socialism all over the world could make socialism in any one country secure, but the immediate job was to set about building socialism in the sector where workers had seized power,

The "Lefts", led by the unspeakable Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev, vociferated that since capitalism abroad meant that socialism in the U. S. S. R. was doomed, all efforts directed towards socialist construction at home should be abandoned as wasteful. The "Rights," led by Rykov, Bukharin and Tomsy moaned that since capitalism abroad could not be overthrown, it was better to come to terms with it.

It was Stalin's historic task to steer the Soviet ship between the ugly shoals of these two ruinous tendencies.

In 1925, the basic task was to convert the Soviets from an agricultural into an industrial country. "Without the certainty of building Socialism," said Stalin, "there can be no will to build socialism." Leninism furnished the certainty and the will.

Stalin's answer to "internationalist" bombast was this : "Building socialism in the U. S. S. R. will further the

common cause of the proletarians of all countries, it will hammer out the victory over capital not only in the U. S. S. R. but in the capitalist countries as well."

The backward countryside, split into a myriad holdings, needed to be transformed. "Dragoon the peasants," cried the "Lefts", inciting poor peasants against the rich and middle peasants. The "Rights" urged that the rich peasants should be helped to get richer and that a backdoor be opened for the return of capitalism.

The Stalin policy, which the party endorsed enthusiastically based itself on the vast majority—poor and middle peasants, who both realised that there could be no escape from poverty except in the collective farm and in mechanised agriculture. The middle peasants joining the Collective Farm movement was, as Stalin said, the most important achievement of the Soviet Government.

During this historic controversy with deviationists, Stalin explained and enlarged upon Lenin's teaching that the victory over capitalism requires correct correlation between the Party, the proletariat and the toilers and exploited as a whole. "He who wants to lead a movement and at the same time keep in touch with the vast masses must wage a fight on two fronts—against those who lag behind and those who rush on ahead".

One of the most popular figures in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Sergei Kirov, who was assassinated by Trotskyists early in 1935, speaking of the Five-Year Plans, described Stalin as "the greatest organiser of the gigantic victories we have achieved."

The Soviet Union had already entered the period of socialism, the leap from an old qualitative state of society to a new qualitative state was already accomplished. It was more than ever necessary, however, to root out the hangovers of capitalism in peoples' minds, to smash all ideologies hostile to Leninism, to raise the ideological level of the Party members and to perfect the internationalist education of the working class. "We must not lull the Party", said Stalin, "but sharpen its vigilance."

Stalin was the guide, philosopher and friend of the millions of Soviet citizens who worked with Titanic energy to transform the national economy. "It is time to realise", he said in a famous address, "*that of all the valuable capital the world possesses, the most valuable and decisive is people, cadres. It must be realised that, under our present conditions, 'cadres decide everything'.* If we have good and numerous cadres in industry, agriculture, transport and the Army, our country will be invincible. If we do not have such cadres, we shall be lame on both legs". The Soviet people responded magnificently to the leader's call; the Stakhanov movement, initiated by rank-and-file workers, smashed old technical standards and created, in Stalin's words, "the possibility of converting our country into the most prosperous of all countries", and therefore a shining exemplar to the working class everywhere.

The new constitution, which embodied, as it were, the main victories of socialism was adopted in December 1936 and was unanimously named after its principal author, Stalin. In a speech to his constituents, he described the type of people who should be elected to the Supreme Soviet—a description which applies aptly to himself. The people

must demand, he said, that they should be political figures of the Lenin type ; that they should be as clear and definite, as fearless in battle, as immune to panic, as merciless towards the enemies of the people as Lenin was ; that they should be as wise and deliberate in deciding complex political problems requiring a comprehensive orientation and a comprehensive weighing of all pros and cons as Lenin was ; that they should be as upright and honest as Lenin was ; that they should love their people as Lenin did.

The brave city of Stalingrad bears in its name the memory of Stalin's magnificent defence of Tsaritsyn. Whoever cares to look up the records will see how during the desperate days of the Civil War and the Intervention, he was invariably sent by the Soviet Government to the most threatened danger points. Every step in the building up of the mighty Red Army with its huge defence industry has been taken on his initiative and carried through by the Party under his guidance.

The "enigma" of Stalin would vanish if only one takes the trouble of reading his works. "Leninism", which contains most of his significant speeches and writings, shows supreme clarity of statement and a most incisive mind ; it shows also a good deal of humour, a vast wealth of knowledge and dynamic thought. To read the report of his talk with H. G. Wells is to think, inevitably, of the giant being asked questions by a pigmy.

Marx turned socialism from a utopia into a science. Lenin directed the proletariat in its struggle for the seizure of power. Under Stalin the working people fortified power and built the Socialist State. The architect of socialism utilised Lenin's strategy in great historical battles.

"Victory never comes of itself ; it has to be dragged by the hand". So Stalin, and his Party, surmounting the most stupendous obstacles, consolidated socialism in Soviet-land, while an incredulous world sneered and then wondered.

They wonder still at Soviet glory, in face of history's cruellest onslaught, but they will soon realise the truth of what Stalin had said on May Day ten years ago *"There are no fortresses that Bolsheviks cannot take"*.*

THE ARMY OF LIBERATION

All the world salutes to-day the heroic Red Army as in very truth the people's own army of liberation. And we in India, with our wonted worries multiplied a thousandfold by Gandhiji's fast and the bureaucracy's arrogant recalcitrance, pause gladly to celebrate the anniversary of the foundation of the Red Army and pay them the tribute which is so richly their due.

Twenty-five years ago when the Soviets were in dire peril, when enemies from within and without were villainously conspiring to strangle the infant State of the common people, Red Guards who were fighting to save the Revolution, were formally constituted into the "Workers' and Peasants' Red Army". This improvised

force, animated by a spirit that defied all disaster, drove back, after many vicissitudes, the ubiquitous invading armies, and after over four years of incomparable fighting, held high the flag of the Soviet Revolution.

This is the army which has grown to a stature so far unattained in the annals of man. This is the army which, fondly nursed by a determined people into strength beyond compare, is teaching some much-needed lessons to the ugly fascist who dared protrude his pig's snout into the Soviet garden. This is the army which is tearing to tatters the die-hard myth of Hitler's invincibility.

Born in battle, the Red Army was hardened and matured in battle. Its commanders were men who had hardly any previous military training and were not tied by military dogmas. It had few arms but unshakable convictions, and with the people stolidly behind them were victorious.

Three years of imperialist war were followed in Sovietland by over four years of civil and interventionist war. The people were famishing; production had dropped to one-fifth the feeble total production of Tsarism in peace, 1913. But the Soviets were undaunted: after a period of restoration, 1921-29, there started the socialist offensive, the drama of the Five Year Plans. "Remember, you are always within an inch of invasion", was Lenin's warning to his people, and rightly, they devoted very special attention to the armament industry. The Red Army came to have adequate bases for supply, in the east as well as in the west.

Expert observers were surprised to note, during the Spanish people's fight against international fascism, that Red aeroplanes and air tactics were superior to any

other, and that Red tanks, large and speedy, were an eyeopener.

The Soviet Union was pursuing, sedulously, the ways of peace. Time was needed to perfect her defence preparations, and war in any case interrupts her gigantic creative tasks. But the Soviets were no "appeasers", and so in 1938 on the heights of Chang Ku feng on the Manchurian border and in 1939 in Mongolia, the Japanese fascist-militarists had a taste of the Soviet whip, a taste that lingers in their mouth even to-day and prevents them wild-goose chasing in Soviet Siberia.

That Hitler's war-chariot could not march over the mangled corpses of the Baltic countries in 1939 was due to the courageous stand of the Red Army in that year. And when the international conspiracy against the Soviets was on the point of using Finland as the spearhead of its long-prepared attack, the Soviets struck. Fighting in Europe's coldest climate, and in mid-winter when there was only one hour of day-light, the Red Army in 104 days broke Europe's most modern fortifications-system—the Mannerheim Line—by frontal assault, and gave the most generous terms of peace to Finland.

During the Finnish campaign and since, the Red Army was slandered by whoever cared to give tongue to malice or misinformation. Then, as during Hitler's perfidious attack on Sovietland, the Red Army suffered annihilation every other week ; its generals were totally incompetent ; its soldiers driven cattle.

Like mist before sunrise, all slander evaporates before the glory which is the Red Army to-day. Where in history is another example of bravery and skill which can compare with the never-to-be-forgotten saga of Stalingrad and

Sebastopol, of the fight before Moscow and the defence of Leningrad, of the magnificent and tremendous offensive which is the red star of hope to all mankind ?

We salute to day the makers and leaders of the Red fighting forces—Stalin, Frunze, Voroshilov, Budenny, Timoshenko, Zhukov, Shaposhnikov, Kuznetsov, Smushkevitch. We remember with scorn the Trotskys and Tukhachevskys, whose pyrrhic adventures and flamboyant attitudinising drove them into treachery and treason and unspeakable degradation. We hail a people who, with stern resolution, threw them relentlessly down into the cesspool of history.

The leaders of the Red Army are not the “gentlemen” on whom Goering so pathetically banks his fast-fading hopes ; they are men of the people. They are, indeed, a different type of human being altogether. And so, while they fight, alone and virtually unassisted, their allies in their out-worn “talking-shops” promise all aid but perform too little.

Not for long will the world's peoples tolerate the pusillanimity which delays and hampers the opening of the Second Front in Europe, for when it comes, it will mean the death of all hope for fascism and the dawn of a brave new era.*

THE RED ROAD TO GLORY

On June 22, 1942, Comrade Kalinin, Chairman of the Supreme Soviet, made a memorable speech on Hitler's

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murderous adventure in Sovietland. He recalled in particular, one of Tolstoy's stories, "How much land does a man need?" It relates that for a certain sum of money a man was to receive as much land as he could include in a circle by running from dawn till sunset. Exhausting himself beyond his strength, the man tried to run as far as possible. He managed to return to his starting point, but collapsed. All he needed was six feet of land for his grave.

"Yes", commented Comrade Kalinin, "Hitler has given land to his crack army. Millions of his soldiers have received their position on Soviet soil".

How the fascists must rue the day when at Hitler's maniac command the cream of their soldiery staged this fatal march into Soviet territory! Flated by vain hopes of a swift and decisive victory, they advanced rapidly enough and flamboyant German communiques trumpeted the news all over the world. They had the initial superiority in numbers and in equipment: their economy had long been switched, ruthlessly, to the total war basis; their mechanised army had already had considerable experience in actual battle operations. But it was not long before there were signs of a turn in the tide; the Red offensive during the winter of 1941-42 gave the fascists some foretaste of what was to come. Goebbels' propaganda moved away from the proclamation of lightning victory towards increased emphasis on the "back to the wall", "defeat means annihilation" theme. All was not well with Hitler's military schemes; death, more often than not in mysterious circumstances, stalked among fighting Nazi leaders—Reichenau, Hoffman, Wilberg, Udet and even Todt, builder of the "autobahen" and the Siegfried Line; the

fascist army, after the battering it had at the hands of Timoschenko's men, was no longer what it was before.

The pusillanimity of the Soviet's western allies, who failed, through fear or design, to open the much needed Second Front in Europe gave a fresh lease of life and hope to Hitler's myrmidions. Indeed, the Soviet people, whose leaders had anticipated their allies' equivocations, nursed no illusions of an easy victory. They knew that the vile enemy would continue to fight with all its ferocity. They knew that European fascism had still considerable resources, and that the more hopeless the position of the Hitlerite hordes, the more adventurous and frantic would be their frenzied attack.

So in the summer of 1942, on a shortened front in the south-west, the fascists launched a terrific onslaught, and by sheer weight of men and metal, advanced as far as the fabled shores of the Volga and the precipitous gates of the Caucasus. But they were fighting against a country which is unlike any other, whose morale nothing could daunt, whose peoples are welded by their Marxist leadership into a rich unity of purpose and achievement. No sacrifices or difficulties could halt the Soviet people in their iron determination to rout their deadly enemy, and when the fascists, inflated by the vain wind of what they imagined was glory, were lured by the Soviets into over-reaching themselves, the Red Army struck, and struck in many sectors. Whoever protrudes his pig's snout into our Soviet garden, will receive the hammer-blow he had so well earned —this was Stalin's warning to the Soviet's ubiquitous enemies. Unlike the ejaculations to which fascist worthies have accustomed the world, Stalin's warnings mean what they say, and so since mid-November last year, the Red

advance of glory has proceeded, the heroic Soviet army has punched the fascists away from the cities that bear the name of Lenin and of Stalin, fair Kuban and the northern Caucasus are free again, and on all Soviet Fronts the enemy is being pushed back, inexorably, to where he came from.

The philistines have scoffed as much as they could. Even to-day perhaps, they would like as much to scoff at Soviet glory. But the handwriting is indeed on the wall. No wonder that Goering screeched and bellowed his curses ; no wonder, in a last whining effort to drive a wedge into the Anglo-Soviet-American alliance, he shouted that "with gentlemen agreement is possible, but not with Bolsheviks". This war, however, is not "gentlemen's", but the peoples', and they know very well how to give the fascist hangmen the proper reply."

THE ANNIVERSARY

June 22 returns again to remind us poignantly of Hitler's perfidious attack on the vanguard of the world's peoples, their shock brigade, their living fortress—the U. S. S. R.

Like thieves in the night, the miserable myrmidions of European fascism stole into Soviet territory and engaged the Soviet frontier guards. In spite of overwhelming superiority in numbers and material, the resistance they encoun-

tered was stubborn enough to extort the admiration of even those who were only too ready and willing to see on Soviet soil another example of the inexorable triumph of German *blitzkrieg*.

Recalling the emotions of two years ago, we confess to a little perturbation. Who is not perturbed, when one's own country is drawn into the cruel vortex of war? Can even the stoutest conviction of final victory entirely obliterate such perturbation?

Not the working class alone, but the progressive people of every country have hitched their wagon to the Red Star of the Soviet Union. The workers' fatherland is the one unfailing fount of hope and inspiration for all who yearn to build on their own soil a new civilisation.

It was natural, therefore, for us to experience perturbation, but we knew, knew for certain, that come what may, the Soviets could never, never lose.

This was not the bravado of blind faith. For faith is not blind, when it is faith in the power, the invincibility of the people. And politics, without this basic faith, peters out in pettifoggery.

It was not long before our faith was vindicated. The *blitz* was soon torn out of Hitler's vaunted *blitzkrieg*. For weeks, the Nazi trumpets had blared the news of wish-fulfilling victories, of final annihilatory battles. Messieurs the bourgeoisie, and their henchmen all over the world, duly hallelujahed the Nazi victories or discreetly regretted the Red retreats.

The war has since then dragged its course—a course longer than what it need have been, if only the Soviets' allies had shed some of their pusillanimity. Fifteen months afterwards, Stalin reported that compared to the

aid which the Soviets were rendering their allies, the aid received in return was 'little effective'. To all intents and purposes, the Red Army alone was fighting the serried might of European fascism.

Even the inveterate enemies of the Soviets have been driven to acknowledge the glory of Soviet resistance. And whoever does not take his lessons in military history from Nazi copybooks and their imitation versions elsewhere, must applaud the grand strategy which drains the life blood out of the fascist vulture.

The Red army broke the spell of the ever victorious panzer. The great battle of Smolensk in the summer of '41 and the grim all-out fight before Moscow in the autumn and early winter of the same year gave braggart fascists a foretaste of what was coming.

Who will ever forget the majesty of the city of Lenin, beleaguered and battered with shot and shell, holding out against all comers and holding aloft the Red flag of unceasing resistance? Who will ever cease to marvel at the stamina, the morale and the bravery beyond compare, which is the story of Stalingrad?

In peace and in war the Soviets have performed miracles. They are not the miracles of esoteric wizardry, celebrated in old-world legends. They are miracles to which all the world to-day can witness. They are miracles of will, of organisation, of tenacity, of devotion to the cause of the workers' fatherland.

The peoples of the world have, therefore, in the Soviets an incomparable leader. The allies of the Soviets are in the proudest company that history records. They have a great and onerous task, that of being the Soviets' worthy compeers.

June 22 brings back brave memories, but they are memories which must be transmuted into hot iron to burn out of the world's body politic the foul gangrene called fascism.

THE NEW WORLD OF THE SOVIETS

Over a sixth of the earth's surface, in territory inhabited by a hundred and seventy million people of variegated race, religion and language, there has emerged a new civilisation. It is a world without precedent in the annals of man, for it has been fashioned, through agony and travail, by classes which have ever been kept off, ruthlessly and unashamedly, from the arena of history. The descendants of slaves and serfs and *pariahs*—for such indeed, are the workers and peasants—spurning the promise of amelioration by the “charity-mongering acrobats” who are the ‘humanists’ of bourgeois civilisation, have built, with blood and toil, this stupendous structure of the new society. No wonder that the Soviet Union is to the disinherited of all countries the land of hope and glory.

Surely, there are shadows as well as lights in the Soviet system. It is impossible in the nature of things to shed in twenty years' time the birthmarks of the past. But the Soviets did not essay the setting up of a utopia. They wanted a world freed from the spectre of poverty and exploitation, a world that would offer heightened possibilities for all to work together for the common good. And from all credible accounts, that indeed has been their achievement. Difficulties that appal the well-meaning bourgeois 'reformer' are as dust in the balance against the stupendous obstacles in the way of Soviet construction. A vast sprawling country, with its Asiatic regions sunk in the most hopeless misery and degradation, inhabited by races and nationalities at varying stages of civilisation, the overwhelming majority of the population illiterate and backward and reconciled to the most ruthless brand of despotism, the land potentially rich beyond compare and its peoples poor beyond description—such was the foundation on which the Soviets had to build. And their task was rendered pretty nearly impossible by civil war and foreign intervention, fanned by enemy interests all over the world, which followed in the wake of the disasters of the Imperialist War of 1914-18. The 'respectable' classes and their allies at home and abroad tried their hand at sabotage and espionage and intrigues with foreign enemies in order to overthrow the regime that the common man had reared. Many of them, the neo-emigres, left the country, for true to the ethics of their class they would rather be prostitutes and pimps and *cabaret* hostesses abroad than stay at home and truckle down to their 'inferiors'. That was not the way, however, to daunt the builders of socialism who, with all the world against them, have achieved their historic task.

WHY INEQUALITY OF INCOMES ?

The vociferous champions of capitalism, wolves indeed in sheep's clothing, sometimes exultantly point out the abandonment of socialism by the Soviet Union. When the Soviets undertook the job of devising an appropriate method of distribution for a socialist society, they established the system of distribution of goods and services in accordance with the quality and quantity of the work done. The sole method of earning a livelihood was earned income, and unearned income was definitively abolished. The preposterous injustice which arises from the payment to lucky individuals of incomes derived from ownership in the means of production was done away with. A Sholokov could own a motor-car, but there could never be a Soviet Ford or Nuffield or Citroen who own motor-car factories. This means, of course, the existence of substantial inequalities, which are attempted to be offset by special educational facilities, etc., to the poorer families. And this naturally makes the Soviet Union a target for those who have read perhaps of the *ex-cathedra* dictum of Bernard Shaw that socialism means equality of income. It is amusing to note that since any stick is good enough to beat the Soviets with, it is the anti-socialists in every country who shout from the housetops their concern over Soviet inequality !

Neither Marx nor Engels nor Lenin ever advocated a rigid equality of incomes. They knew that any attempt to impose to-day a flat equality of wages on all workers would show a misunderstanding of the real circumstances in which we live. During and immediately after the capitalist epoch, human nature whether we like it or not, does expect and demand varying individual rewards. Human nature

has not always been so in the past, and will not be so in the future. But since production must be accelerated to beat capitalism in its own game, the principle of equality of wages and salaries, even if desirable, cannot be practised.

A flat equality of pay, again will not even be desirable. Much as it is wanted by those who feel intensely the monstrous iniquities of capitalist society, it is little more than a sentimental illusion. Every human being differs from every other, not only in abilities but also in requirements. "One man's health forces him to live a long way from his work ; one family must have, because it contains several young children, much more house room than another ; one woman is, and another is not, naturally ascetic, and so on and so on. The distribution of equal incomes either per family or still less per individual worker would not then put people on an equal economic status."

Payment in accordance with the quality and quantity of work is not of course the best that can be done. It represents no more than a transitional stage to a society run on the principle—"from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs". That alone will permit of the full development of humanity and will altogether eliminate coercion from human affairs. That will represent the higher stage—the highest that can be envisaged at present.

To repeat, the existing Soviet system is one in which the products are distributed in accordance with the quantity and quality of work done. This is *socialism*, or as Marx said in his *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, the first stage of communism. And as soon as certain material and psychological pre-requisites have been established, there will come a system which distributes products according

to need and gets work done according to ability. That will be the higher stage—*communism*.

In the U.S.S.R. to-day, according to a reliable calculation, about one-quarter of the purchasing power received by the population comes to it, not in the form of wages for work done, but by way of various social and free public services distributed on the basis of needs. Socialism, indeed, has triumphed in the Soviet Union and is being transformed, slowly but surely, into communism.

When this is borne in mind, one need not worry about the inequalities in the Soviet system to-day. In contemporary Britain and America, the difference of income between the unskilled labourer and the millionaire owner of the means of production has been calculated to be in the ratio of 1 to 40,000. The inequalities between earned incomes in the U.S.S.R. are normally in the ratio of no more than 1 to 15. This means that while the largest Soviet income can well be spent on consumers' goods and services, the bourgeois magnate must accumulate, pile up compound interest and buy income-bearing property in the means of production. In the Soviets, the means of production are socially owned, and so the exploitation of man by man is effectively obviated.

There is no call for worry, even in regard to the sale in recent years of interest-bearing government bonds in the U.S.S.R. Bonds worth some £2 million have been sold also to foreigners. The amount is trivial in any case and is due to be paid off during the nineteen-forties. Individual savings by way of such purchase do not, of course, carry any ownership of means of production. When Soviet industry can itself provide all the funds necessary for accumulation and when adequate and comprehensive social

services will render individual savings utterly superfluous, this temporary and transitional but inevitable feature of a planned socialist economy functioning in a hostile capitalist environment will, with ease and expedition, be eliminated.

Soviet leadership has always been realist. It has never been naive enough to think that momentous changes can be brought about and consolidated, just by a number of people sitting down together and saying, "Let's have a nice plan which will make us all happy !" The pitfalls in the way necessitated a less ingenuous approach, pitfalls that no amount of wish-fulfilling theorising could obliterate.

IS STALIN A DICTATOR ?

There is a widely held notion in our country that Soviet leadership is really a one-man show, that Stalin is the master of all the Russias, the boss of the communist party, controlling every wheel and screw of the machinery of the State. This is a charge very generally put forward, but it is based on an utter misconception.

¹ The highest position of dignity in the U.S.S.R. is held by Kalinin, president of the presidium of the Supreme Soviet. Till his recent appointment to the position corresponding to that of the Prime Minister of a parliamentary country, Stalin was only the general secretary of the communist party and as such, one among the nine members of its most important sub-committee, the Politbureau. He was of course, a member of the executive of the Communist International, but so were so many others like Dimitrov, its secretary. To those who might object that the general secretaryship of the party is by itself the key to the leadership of the movement, it can be pointed out that there have been secretaries of the party before Stalin—men like Bogdanoff, who is now a nonentity.

There is nothing in the Soviet Union which corresponds to the Leader-principle (*Fuhrer-prinzip*) in Nazi ideology, the worship, as of a god, of the supreme leader. "God is lonely ; Hitler is lonely ; Hitler is God"—so runs a notorious, typically Nazi "syllogism." The megalomaniac flourishes of Benito Mussolini are an Italian variation on Louis XIV's theme : *L'etat, c'est moi*. (I am the State). "My decisions," said the Italian dictator. "come to maturity often in the night—in the solitude of my spirit and the solitude of my rather arid (because practically non-social) personal life." Such ebullitions are utterly foreign to Stalin's temper and to Marxism.

To Emil Ludwig's question, Stalin once replied unequivocally : "*Single persons cannot decide*. From the experience of three revolutions we know that approximately out of every 100 decisions made by single persons, that have not been tested and corrected collectively, 90 are one-sided. In our leading body, the central committee of the party, which guides all our Soviet and party organisations, there are about 70 members. *In this areopagus is concentrated the wisdom of our party*." Sidney and Beatrice Webb have told us how the areopagus works. One of Stalin's memorable speeches—"Dizzy with Success"—in connection with distortions of the party line in the collective farm movement was written, Stalin himself relates, because the central committee had directed him to write it in accordance with decisions already reached. "Some people believe that the article is the result of the personal initiative of Stalin. That is nonsense. Our central committee does not exist in order to permit the personal initiative of anybody, whoever it may be, in matters of this kind."

The history of the Soviets during the time Stalin has been the alleged dictator, shows an emphasis on self-criticism which, surely, is anathema to the dictators and on prolonged discussion which has often militated against the success of policies adopted. The Five-Year Plans, the frantic drive towards self-sufficiency in the heavy industries, the determination to universalise collective farming and liquidate the *Kulak*—these policies have borne, in the manner of their adoption and in the style of their formulation, the stigmata of committee control. Sidney and Beatrice Webb found that the Soviet government "has been, and still is, government by whole series of committees." In the committees, no doubt, Stalin as a supreme analyst of situations, personalities and tendencies plays a very important role.

The Webbs tell us how the children of Stalin read in the ordinary ten-year schools of the Moscow City Soviet, how they were never pointed out to visitors and how it was forbidden to distinguish between them and other pupils. John Gunther in *Inside Europe* gives further homely details that bear out this view. Stalin's wife, who died in 1932, was in the school for industrial arts, studying the manufacture of artificial silk. There was no publicity attaching to this: she worked like any one else and battled her way into the ordinary trams, instead of using a Kremlin Packard.

There is no doubt, however, that there has been in the Soviet Union something like deliberate exploitation of the emotion of hero-worship, the traditional reverence of the people for an individual leader. Even the revolutionary working class cannot deny history, cannot cut itself entirely adrift from tradition. And it is no surprise that

Lenin is to all intents and purposes canonised in the Soviet Union ; his word is to be interpreted, but hardly to be confuted. After Lenin's death, it was felt that his place could never be filled, but a new personality was necessary to symbolise the aspirations of 170 million people. The choice fell on Stalin who was so much more stable in judgment than the histrionic, erratic and supremely egoistic Trotsky. The choice was made on Stalin's solid record of faithful, unostentatious and invaluable work.

It is often difficult to appreciate, and even easy to suspect, the fulsome references to "our glorious leader, Comrade Stalin." But perhaps one can be persuaded that Stalin does, after all, command the affection and loyalty of his people. This may sometimes find crudely sentimental expression. But to give only one example, did not Jawaharlal Nehru at Lucknow Congress endure, because he had to, Hindi and Urdu hymns in his honour which, in wealth of adjectives, beat Slav eulogies hollow ? Our sophisticated reaction to such phenomena is not perhaps terribly important.

REAL FREEDOM

The new Soviet constitution of 1936 is often called the Stalin Constitution, for he was chairman of the preparatory commission and steered the measure through the Congress of Soviets. The section in this constitution on the Basic Rights and Obligations of Citizens is a most remarkable document. The sheet-anchor of the American Declaration of Independence and of the French Declaration of the Rights of Man was individual ownership of private property with a view to profit. A radical thinker like Bentham, the oracle of early 19th century political thought, was not prepared to permit any

other encroachment on the indefeasible rights of private property save that of taxation. Property continues on its high pedestal, and its preservation is the prime concern of every State. But the Soviets with their revolutionary ideology ignore the sacrosanctity of property and its rights. The Soviet Constitution, therefore, does not proclaim them as among the "inalienable rights of man." It concerns itself with other and more vitally relevant things. It guarantees to every citizen, not only protection from aggression, but also the right to remunerative work, the right to specified hours of rest and to holidays with pay ; the right to free and unlimited education of every kind and grade ; and above all, the full provision, according to need, in all the vicissitudes of life. What is enormously important is that these rights, which are but aspirations in capitalist society, have in the Soviet Union a *tangible* basis. "All these new and unprecedented rights of man," Sidney Webb writes, "are guaranteed by the constitution, not merely to a ruling class, a dominant race, a favoured sex, or even a specially insured minority, but universally, according to need, without individual insurance premium, and without exclusion of sex or colour or social past, to all citizens in city or village, including the backward peoples of nearly 200 tribes throughout the vast continent." What a contrast this offers to the state of things with which we in this country are so familiar !

A measure of the defeat of counter-revolution in the U.S.S.R. is furnished by the provisions regarding the liberty of the person against arbitrary arrests and imprisonment, necessitated in the earlier period by recurrent, treasonable intrigues. Article 127 provides that "the citizens of the U.S.S.R., are guaranteed inviolability of

person. No person can be placed under arrest except by decision of the court or with the sanction of the state attorney" (that is, the judicial department of the Procurator, which, Mr. Webb points out, is often absurdly translated as 'prosecutor'). Article 125 further provides that "the citizens of the U.S.S.R. are guaranteed freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and the holding of mass meetings, and freedom of street processions and demonstrations." The article proceeds to point out that these rights "are insured by placing at the disposal of toilers and their organisations printing presses, supplies of paper, public buildings, the streets, means of communication, and other material requisites for the exercise of these rights." It does not need to be said that without these material requisites, which the workers lack in capitalist countries, the right would indeed be illusory.

Critics of the Soviet system—and among them none are more ruthless than those "labour lieutenants of the capitalist class," the leaders of the British Labour Party and their prototypes everywhere—delight in pointing out an alleged dichotomy between democracy and dictatorship, which latter they condemn as equally pernicious, whether of the Right or of the Left. A few crumbs from the masters' table, and hopes of a share, howsoever microscopic, in the superprofits of imperialism—reconcile them to the omnipresent dictatorship of property, subtly veiled by draperies that cruelly deceive the common people. They talk complacently of "pure democracy," a phrase which reveals ignorance of the class struggle and is perfectly empty of content. They proudly assert that liberty is safe only in their so-called democracies, glibly forgetting what Stalin once said with simple force :

"Real liberty exists only where exploitation has been abolished, where no oppression of some people by others exists, where there is no unemployment and poverty, where a person does not tremble because to-morrow he may lose his job, his home, his food."

They choose to forget that the Soviets seized power in a time of political confusion, economic breakdown and military defeat, that they built up their form of government under the pressure of internal civil war, foreign intervention and blockade. Any government in such conditions should have been compelled to ration liberty with a parsimonious hand.

Even so, the Soviet power was, from the very first day it came into existence, a democracy for nine-tenths of the population. It destroyed, for the first time in history, the age-old difference between formal freedom and its "earthly existence." And the new constitution which abolished the former limitations on freedom showed that while under capitalism developments tend towards "negative democracy and the drift to fascism," the Soviets are heading towards the complete liberation of the human personality by the removal of material hindrances to its real development.

There is a passage in St. John's Revelations which, in these days of the Hitler onslaught on the U.S.S.R. might well come to the minds of its friends: "The Devil has come down amongst you, having great wrath, because he knoweth he hath but a short time." The Devil hath, indeed, but a short time, for the Soviets and their state apparatus will, in their own good time, beat him to pulp. When the class struggle is finally liquidated and civilisation secured, the state itself will

wither away, "pre-history will end and history will begin."

Meanwhile, the peoples of all the world salute the U.S.S.R. and its wondrous achievements, and hail the proletarian State as an example and an inspiration. And India proclaims her determination to be on guard —on guard with the Soviets for freedom and social revolution.*

THE SOVIETS AND US

The Soviets are my country.

Yes, the Soviets are my country, though, of course, I am Indian to my fingertips and as good a patriot, I hope, as any other.

Perhaps I had better repeat myself. I love every blade of Indian grass. I care for nothing so much in life as Indian freedom, real freedom for the masses of our people who have had through the centuries a lot more than their share of the world's woes. And with all my attachment and my indefeasible devotion to the land of my birth, I think also of the Soviet Union as my own country ; it guards, I know, the happiness and the future of all mankind ; it is, I feel, the living fortress of our own India as of every country that suffers and is heavyladen.

Need we recall how the Soviet Revolution in 1917 emancipated in the real sense of the word a hundred and seventy million people and prepared the ground, with ruthlessness no doubt but the kind of ruthlessness which accompanies all creation, for the emergence of a new civilisation? In "ten days that shook the world", to quote John Reed's celebrated characterisation, the most far-reaching revolution in human history was ushered into being. Revolutions in the past would usually end in changing one group of exploiters at the helm of the state for another. Exploitation remained while the exploiters would change. This happened during the emancipatory movements of the slaves, during the period of the rebellions of the serfs, during the period even of the wellknown "great" revolutions in France, England and Germany. The October Revolution differed fundamentally from these revolutions. It abolished all exploitation of man by man, and precisely on this account, *the victory of the October Revolution means "a radical change in the history of mankind, a radical change in the historical tendencies of world capitalism, a radical change in the movement for the emancipation of the world proletariat, a radical change in the methods of struggle and the forms of organisation, in everyday life and tradition, in the culture and ideology of exploited masses throughout the world."*

(Stalin).

Stalin once said that communists are a different sort of people, they are made of different clay. And so one feels, they must be, or they could not face the appalling difficulties in their way—difficulties accentuated a hundredfold by civil war and famine and foreign intervention, incited and maintained for as long as they could by

enemy interests all over the world. But for all the attempts to throttle the infant Soviet State, the builders of Socialism defied, undaunted, the hostility of all the world and achieved their historic task. Where the bane of Czarism had fallen as a blight on a sixth of the earth's surface, where life was hard and cruel and civilisation the uneasy prerogative of a very few, Socialism was victorious and reaped a golden harvest of power and felicity for the people.

Every weapon in the capitalist armoury has been employed in the fight relentlessly carried on for years against the Soviets. Intervention, open as well as veiled, low-down vituperation and insidious antagonism, recurring appeasement of fascism with a view to a war of all the world on the Soviet Union—such, among others, have been the methods used. All this, however, has been of little avail; the living example of Socialist achievement and brotherhood has bound the masses of all countries to the Soviet Union, the workers' government have shown such sheer many-sided ability that all scoffing and sneering has been hushed in spite of slanderous enemies by the never-to-be-forgotten display of the strength of the people's own army of liberation.

Perhaps it will not be superfluous, even today, when hallelujahs to the Soviets are wrenched from the unlikelyst quarters, to recall one significant example of the efforts which were made till lately to quarantine and crush the workers' State. When Japan had begun to move in east Asia as crusader-in-chief against Bolshevism, the Pope issued in May 1932 an Encyclical (*Caritate Christi*), openly calling for a united front of all imperialist states to overthrow the "phalanx of atheistic communists", "the

enemies of social order", by "all legitimate human means". In this unity of "Christian" nations the pontiff made a specific addition to include Japan : "Although those who glory in the name of Christ should be the first in this union of minds and strength, let those likewise loyally aid who still believe in God and adore Him" As R. P. Dutt remarked, this ingenuity is paralleled only by the Nazi discovery that the Japanese were really "Aryans".

In spite of its many-garbed enemies, the Soviets have succeeded in setting the world a shining example that nothing can fade. They have established a social system where inequalities due to sex, race and nationality have been eliminated. There is work for all in Soviet society, and all must work. Through free education each person is free to develop his or her capacities to the full and then has opportunities to use them. Work, and not immunity from it, is the badge of honour. People do not see their portraits in the press for rolling luxuriously about in race courses and exclusive, expensive, parties, but for flying across the North Pole, for stepping-up production, for enriching the life of the community. The Soviets, indeed, are the exemplar for all the world to cherish.

The Soviets have organised the economic life of the country in a manner that works according to a carefully prepared plan to meet the needs of the community. The land and the means of production are public property in Sovietland. The bourgeoisie, proud of their *entrepreneur* qualities, find their occupation gone, for the Soviets have shown them up as quite superfluous, have proved that the proletariat can master the productive forces created by the bourgeoisie and develop them at an incredibly faster rate. The Soviets have abolished chronic mass employment

which is a feature of capitalism and have provided a steadily rising standard of life to the entire people. The crippling uncertainty of life under capitalism—the haunting fear of being deprived of work, of home and of bread is a thing of the bad old past in the Soviet regime.

Tsarist Russia was appalling in its backwardness, but inspite of this terrible handicap inherited by the Soviets, they have succeeded in providing both leisure and security to the working people. Wartime necessities must have brought about great changes but the average working day in Soviet industry was less than seven hours as early as 1935. Paid holidays are guaranteed every year to the Soviet worker. Free medical care is available to whoever needs it and the worker has not to go without his pay when off work owing to illness. The law guarantees four whole months off work on full pay to pregnant women. Children and women are, as a matter of fact, treated better in the Soviets than anywhere else in the world.

A most remarkable feature of the Soviets is the *mass character* of the new social order. It is this which led Sidney and Beatrice Webb to the realisation that the dictatorship of the proletariat is, inspite of its name, a new and a higher form of democracy. Lenin had said in 1919 : "*The dictatorship of the proletariat must inevitably lead, not only to a change in the forms and institutions of democracy, speaking generally, but to such a change as will lead to the extension of the actual enjoyment of democracy to those who are oppressed by capitalism, to the toiling classes, to a degree hitherto unprecedented in world history.*" This is exactly what has happened in the U. S. S. R. The masses are in actual fact shaping their lives and shaping history in a manner that has no precedent. Sidney and

Beatrice Webb, with their scientific training in sociological research, could point out the fallacy of even some sympathetic observers of Soviet life who draw pictures of devoted "communist rulers" heroically remaking the country and bringing new life and culture to the masses. These well-meaning but confused observers bring back reports as of a benevolent socialism from above, which they either praise with delight or alternatively fear that the "loss of liberty" is too great a price for a number of admitted material and cultural benefits. The Webbs, on the other hand, point out the enormous freedom provided for the workers actively to participate in the conduct of their own affairs, freedom not only to criticise those in positions of authority but to find abundant scope for personal initiative which results in the fullest development of the personality of the ordinary Soviet citizen.

Writing in 1935, the Webbs tell us, for example, that "apart from such salaried staff as exists, as many as 50,000 citizens are at any moment participating in the administration of Moscow and nearly as many in that of Leningrad"; that 70,000 village councils are enjoying an "unprecedented freedom, without such safeguards as prior enquiry and sanction, a statutory maximum for local expenditure and a limit to local taxation"; that, besides the salaried staff, 3 million trade-union members are at any time actively engaged in the 136,640 factory committees and shop committees and their sub-committees, so that "apart from the officers paid and unpaid, at least 15 per cent of trade union members are actively engaged in committee work"; that of the gigantic electorate of 91 millions ("by far the largest voting body in the world"), no less than 85 per cent take direct part, not merely in the sense of casting a vote

but directly participating in meetings and discussions lasting many hours and sometimes successive days. The new Stalin Constitution has meant a further development of Soviet democracy—democracy for all, not alone in name, but in actual fact. No wonder that the disinherited of every country, including ours, hail the Soviets as the mighty embodiment of their heart's desire.

The Soviets today are leading the people's war of liberation and are fighting in a manner which has opened many a jaundiced eye. For as long as it was possible, the Soviets strained every nerve to make the world safe for freedom, peace and progress. Alone among all Great Powers, the Soviets fought earnestly for disarmament and when that was found impossible, for drastic reduction of armaments. They gave the world the slogan of "collective security" to smash the foul claws of the "aggressor." The People's United Peace Front against fascism and war was the result of Soviet inspiration. But while the anti-fascist movement spread far and wide and became part of the people's consciousness, the inability of bourgeois governments to see beyond their nose and to cease conspiring to appease the fascist powers with a view to a second and greater war of intervention in the Soviet Union, has plunged the world into an Armageddon, from out of which the Soviets alone are pointing the way to a new world of freedom and of peace. We in India have been flung into the cruel vortex of war and can look up mainly to the Soviets as our guide, mentor and friend.

The Soviet Union is not impelled by any of those forces which inescapably drive all capitalist states to war. The economic structure of the Soviet Union, being based on planned production for community consumption and not

on production for the market in order to yield a profit on capital, is not driven to fight for conquest and domination of markets as the necessary outlet for surplus goods. It has no need of outlets for export of capital, or of annexation and subjugation of other peoples to secure payment of tribute. It has no need of colonies, mandates, subject territories to secure extending areas of exploitation for growing accumulation of capital. It has no commercial profitmaking armament industries sending round agents all over the world, in the manner of capitalist Big Money, to foment wars and war-scares in the hope of dividends from death.

There are some who object that it is the size of the U. S. S. R., the fact that it has all the natural resources necessary to a self-contained country, and not its economic and social system, which explain why it does not need more territory. But surely, did the Tsarist government, which had even more territory at its disposal, ever show any disposition towards the principles of Soviet foreign policy? Has not every variety of imperialism, British and French, German and Japanese, Russian and American, always wanted more territory and gone to war to get it? The new type of government in the U. S. S. R., organised on an unprecedented basis, does not and cannot want more territory. The size of the country where this new government has been set up is not the decisive factor.

In spite of its predilection for peace, the Soviet government never lost its sense of the hard realities of a competitive, capitalist world. And so, in the present war, we see evidence of how the Soviets have been producing more guns as well as more butter, guns with which to teach a lesson to those who have the temerity to violate the integrity and independence of the Soviets.

It is only a few miles from our own hill-girt borders that the Soviet country begins. The contrast between our two countries is vivid, indeed—more vivid when India, which continues in “planned backwardness” as the “agrarian hinterland” of British imperialism, is compared with any of the Central Asian Republics of the Soviet Union, which twenty years ago were in a sorrier mess than India herself. It is no wonder, then, that we yearn to clasp our neighbour’s hand and learn from her example.

Should we in India ever lose heart when we recall the ugly hang-overs from the past which the Soviets inherited in 1917? In the empire of the Tsars, the masses were illiterate and superstitious, reverential towards a tyrannical monarchy, exceptionally diseased and in places actually barbarous; its governing class, largely of foreign origin, was degenerate and corrupt; its constitution was hopelessly inefficient and obsolete. In the empire of the Tsars, the peasantry, ground down by oppression and according to the bourgeoisie reconciled to it, used the wooden plough and wished no better: they would fight burning thatch in a cottage fire with gallons of milk through superstitious fear of using water for the purpose. In the empire of the Tsars, there was some little large-scale industry, but it was built, as in India, on the feeble foundation of a primitive agriculture and with the help, very largely, of foreign capital; “Russia was in reality a semi-colony of the Western European countries.” If revolution could come and transmute the life of all the Russias, why can’t it happen in India too?

Our people are described as impractical, given to mysticism and superstition, pining only for compensation for the ills of this life in the ecstasies of the next. Similar

expatiations on the "Russian soul" can easily, also, be recalled. One reads in a hundred books on the old Russia of the "typical Russian" as an erratic, unstable creature, capable of spurts of energy or decision, but devoid of the sturdy, poised perseverance characteristic, presumably, of the God-gifted Anglo-Saxon. Great writers like Dostoevsky lent colour to this picture, but in reality they were portraying themselves and their like, people who were intolerant of existing conditions and yet powerless to alter them, who were profoundly disturbed by the life around them but were forced to vacillate and kowtow before overwhelming authority. Here is a true-to-type picture of the frustrated individual which is not too uncommon in our country also. But the main point which emerges is that like the myth of the "Russian soul", the myth of the "fatalist Indian" and his placid contentment will simply explode, once our people seize power as they did in Russia.

The story of the re-making of man in the Soviet Union is history's grandest epic. The provision of the amplest opportunities for the good life, the summons to science as the handmaid of progress, the ruthless extermination of whoever wanted to regain their lost paradise of exploitation, the drama of planning by the people for their own weal, the fight for freedom, for peace, for progress for all mankind—here is material for sagas that will never fail to inspire men's minds. Like the rest of the world, we in India salute the Soviets, the miracle-makers of history, and fervently hope to emulate them.

Nothing perhaps in the Soviet Union moves us so much as the creation of a social order in which Uzbek and Tatar, Yakut and the Gypsy, Bashkir and Kazak, Negro and Jew,

breathe the air of freedom and share equally with the Great Russian and the Ukrainian in the glory of work and achievement. The civilisation of Europe has, no doubt, much to commend itself ; but to the aborigines of Australia it brought little but tuberculosis and the tribes dwindled and disappeared at the invaders' touch. Europe annexed the continent of Africa, and the Africans were poisoned by imported alcohol, and pathetically torn from their soil, degenerated in the cities, mines and plantations where European science enchained them. Red Indian chiefs in America were presented with motor cars and top hats in exchange for the oil wells which were the property of their tribes ; the glitter of these prizes distracted them from their own decline and extermination. The record of Empire in Asia—of the British, the French, the Dutch and the Japanese, to mention only the ringleaders—is, for all the white paint of imperial propagandists, much too black a blotch. In the Soviets alone, the Russians who might have followed in the wake of imperialists, used their technical superiority to educate the backward peoples in a deliberate effort to make them as technically able as themselves. All testimony is unanimous that Soviet Russians did not train the Bashkirians and the Kazakhs in industrial technique with a view to exploiting their manpower. On the contrary, Soviet engineers who formed the skilled nucleus of the eastern factories were themselves men who could be ill spared from the urgent work of reconstruction in western Russia. The motive, however, of the Lenin-Stalin National Policy was to build a new and enlightened humanity, rich in its multiform socialist culture, and today the Soviets are reaping a wonderful harvest of power and glory in consequence of it. While in the camp of

capitalism were "national enmity and inequality, colonial slavery and chauvinism, national oppression and pogroms, imperialist brutalities and war", in the camp of socialism could be seen "mutual confidence and peace, national freedom and equality, a dwelling together in peace and the brotherly collaboration of peoples." National oppression could be destroyed at its roots only by the elimination of exploitation of man by man. The Russian and the Tajik could only fraternise when Tajikistan was no longer the happy hunting-ground of Russian avarice, when the Russian and the Tajik were joining hands to build a new social order where the right of all to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" would be no mere aspiration but an accomplished fact.

Perhaps some will allege that while many of us feel for the Soviets as if it was our own country, the Soviets, preoccupied with their own urgent tasks, really do not care about India, and that being Britain's ally in the present war, do not ask Britain to relax her hold on India. This allegation, however, is based on a profound misconception which the bare recital of a few facts should eradicate.

Stalin never dreams of making an *appeal* to the representatives of a ruling class to be generous and to *grant* freedom to their subject peoples. Marxism teaches him not to expect self-abnegation from imperialists. It teaches him, however, that *all* peoples have the unquestioned right to be free, and that the Soviets must help them, in all possible ways, in their fight for freedom. It teaches him that theory and practice must be unified, which is why the Soviets practise what they preach.

In December 1917, only a month after the Bolshevik Revolution, Lenin and Stalin, on behalf of the Council of

People's Commissars issued a proclamation to the "Labouring Moslems of Russia and the East", subjects of the erstwhile Tsarist empire, promising them the right of unhampered self-determination.

In September 1920, the Soviets organised a unique assembly in Baku—the Congress of the Peoples of the East—attended by 1819 delegates belonging to 37 nationalities. This was at a time when the War of Intervention was in full swing and the Soviets were in mortal peril.

Remembering that national revolutionaries, inspite of not being Communists, are a progressive force, the Soviets established the friendliest relations with Afghanistan, Persia, Turkey and China. Voluntarily the Soviets renounced in Persia and in China all privileges, priorities, concessions and capitulations which the Tsarist government had enjoyed, and the Soviets, if the oft-repeated slanders of "Red imperialism" had any validity, might well have maintained.

"Russia was the first country to aid us in the national struggle", Dr. Sun Yat-sen had said. The first All-China Congress of the Kuomintang declared friendship with the Soviet Union as "the only country anxious to see China a liberated nation."

In his *Foundations of Leninism*, Stalin in 1924 expressed the hope that India might soon have her revolution and break the next great link in the chain of empire. He had faith, and has still, in the revolutionary potentialities of the Indian people, not in the conversion to generosity of the British ruling class.

We in India can never have the slightest doubt about Soviet principles and intentions, when friend and foe alike testify to the Soviet's wonderful "nationalities" policy

which shows the clearest practical recognition of the equality of all peoples and their right to completest freedom.

The Soviets have never believed in revolutions being hawked about in a suitcase. For some time after November 1917, there was hope of revolutions breaking out in many countries. Facts, however, showed that reaction, long entrenched, cannot just be wished away, and revolutionary preparations were still inadequate. Peoples' movements needed, therefore, to gather increasing strength in every country, and the Soviets, consolidated on a sixth of the earth, would lend them hope and inspiration and the power of a glorious example. The Soviets, besides, by reason of their strength developed inspite of mountainous obstacles since 1917, seek to clear the decks for action by the peoples of respective countries to forge their own revolution.

The Soviets know that if the peoples exert their united force on their rulers, the anti-fascist war of today will be fought in the only way it should be, and freedom for all is sure to follow. They know that for as long as they can, the imperialists will refuse to sign their death-warrant—they will resist the opening and implementing of the Second Front in western Europe, and the establishment of a National Government to mobilise India's patriotic resources. They know also that the peoples will fight with all their strength to win these instruments of victory, and that the pressure of events moulded by the people's movements, the logic of history, will bring about the diehard imperialist's capitulation.

To this fight, therefore, the Soviets call the world's peoples. They do not insult our patriotism by recom-

mending our case for favourable consideration by our rulers. They ask for positive action by the peoples themselves, and they do so in the supreme conviction that the path of freedom lies through victory in the war. It is this conviction, indeed, which rings out in Molotov's unambiguous declaration that *"a time will come when the Soviet Union and the Soviet peoples, headed by their great leader J. V. Stalin, will undoubtedly liberate not only the peoples of Europe but of the entire world."*

In a little over twenty years and in face of the most stupendous odds, the common people have created a new civilisation. They have shown the world "the road to life", a golden road that even waifs and strays have been salvaged to tread exultantly together with the rest of the community. They have produced heroes of creative labour and when they pay homage to their heroes, they set beside tales of record flights, parachute jumps, skiing over mountains and riding over deserts, the more humdrum experiences of farm girl, factory worker and school teacher. They have built history's first integrated community; their tribulation and travail represent mankind's first "leap from the realm of necessity to that of freedom."

We do not look for utopia in Sovietland. There are and must be lights as well as shades in Soviet life. The birthmarks of an ugly past cannot be wishfully obliterated even in Soviet society. Did not treason, in plausible but all the more criminal guises, rear its ugly head as late as 1937? The stern test of war, however, has shown an incredulous world something of Soviet mettle. "There are no fortresses which Bolsheviks cannot take."

The Soviet Union is the fatherland of the world's workers, their advance guard, their shock brigade. It is the

one unfailing fount of hope and inspiration for all who yearn to build on their own soil a new civilisation. It is in the war on fascism the people's incomparable leader. And with fascism beaten into pulp, the Red trail of glory will blaze the path of the freedom of the world's peoples.

Would it be a surprise, then, if the Soviets at war touch the depths of my emotion and if I affirm my Indian patriotism and say at the same time, unashamed, that the Soviets also are my country ?

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